

HAGEL CRITICS WANT VOTE ON NOMINATION

D. SUPERVILLE

Associated Press

PORT ST. LUCIE, Florida

(AP) — Republican opponents of former Sen. Chuck Hagel's stalled bid to become defense secretary said Sunday that they'll probably allow his Senate confirmation vote to proceed unless material more damaging to the nominee — and, by extension, the Obama administration — surfaces in the coming week.



Sen. John McCain, R-Ariz., left, and Sen. Kelly Ayotte, R-N.H., on Capitol Hill in Washington.

(AP Photo/J.S. Applewhite)

Critics said Hagel, a decorated Vietnam combat veteran, is a "radical" unqualified to lead the U.S. military. A top White House official expressed "grave concern" over the delayed confirmation vote, adding that there was nothing to worry about in any disclosures that may yet come. "No, I don't believe he's qualified," Sen. John McCain said of his fellow Republican and former Senate colleague.

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New White House Chief of Staff Denis McDonough speaks on CBS's "Face the Nation" in Washington, Sunday, Feb. 17, 2013. On talk shows Sunday McDonough said Obama is concerned about the effect the automatic budget cuts, scheduled for next month, will have on America's middle class.

(AP Photo/Chris Usher)

Obama, GOP prepare for budget battle

WASHINGTON (AP) — President Barack Obama is concerned about the effect that looming, drastic across-the-board budget cuts will have on the middle class, his new chief of staff said Sunday. Congressional Republicans predicted the cuts would start as scheduled next month and blamed Obama not only for doing little to stop them but for the idea itself. The cuts, called the sequester, would drain \$85 billion from the government's budget over the coming seven months. Actual cuts may be around 13 percent

for defense and 9 percent for other programs because lawmakers delayed their impact, requiring savings over a shorter period of time.

Last week, the White House last week let loose a list of ways Americans would feel the cuts, from longer waits at airport security to as many as 13,000 teachers being laid off. Outgoing Secretary of Defense Leon Panetta told a congressional panel that the sequester would hollow the U.S. military because it would give the Pentagon little leeway in deciding how best

to spend the money. Denis McDonough, Obama's chief of staff, warned the cuts would come as the stock market is coming back, the housing market has improved and the number of jobs has grown, and urged Congress to consider a balanced approach that would further strengthen the economy and, in turn, the middle class.

"This isn't a spending fight for us," McDonough told NBC television's "Meet the Press." "This is a fight about whether we're going to make the investments in middle class families in this

country, in education, in science and technology, in food inspection, and those kinds of things."

Senate Democrats last week offered a plan they say is a balanced approach of more revenue and budget cuts. The White House supports the proposal, but it drew an icy reception from Republicans, who say the president got the tax increases he wanted during the agreement in early January to avoid the "fiscal cliff."

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Pope blesses huge crowd in St. Peter's Square

FRANCES D'EMILIO

Associated Press

VATICAN CITY (AP) — His arms outstretched in a symbolic embrace, Pope Benedict XVI blessed tens of thousands of cheering people on Sunday in one of his last appearances as pontiff from his window overlooking St. Peter's Square.

Last week, 85-year-old Benedict shocked the world by announcing his resignation. He will step down on Feb. 28, planning to retreat to a life of prayer in a monastery behind the Vatican's ancient walls.

The noontime appointment in the vast cobblestone square also served as a kind of trial run for how Rome will handle the logistics, including crowd security, as the city braces for faithful to flock to Rome for the election and installation of the cardinal who will succeed Benedict as leader of the world's 1.2 billion Catholics. Rome Mayor Gianni Alemanno said upward of 100,000 people turned out Sunday and that everything went smoothly. But while there was still space in St. Peter's Square for more, many couldn't get in — or easily out — because entrances from the main boulevard were just too narrow.

The huge crowd — including parents with babies in carriages and strollers, el-

derly people using canes, and the disabled in wheelchairs — tried to squeeze through two spaces police left open in the metal barricades edging the square. Some people panicked or called out to police to help them get in or out of the square.

Pilgrims and tourists had an easier time if they entered through spaces in the elegant colonnade that architect Gianlorenzo Bernini designed to cradle the sides of the St. Peter's Square.

Benedict seemed touched by the outpouring of affection after his decision to go down in history as the first pontiff in some 600 years to resign. The pontiff told cardinals last week that he no longer has the mental and physical stamina to vigorously shepherd the church. Looking into hazy sunshine Sunday, he smiled shyly at the sight of the crowd below, filled with pilgrims waving their countries' flags and holding up banners with words of support. One group of Italians raised a banner which read: "We love you."

Speaking in Italian, the pope told the cheering crowd: "Thanks for turnout in such numbers! This, too, is a sign of the affection and the spiritual closeness that you are giving me in these days." He stretched out his arms as if to embrace the

faithful from across the vast expanse of the square.

Benedict made no direct reference to his departure. But in his comments to Spanish-speaking pilgrims he asked the faithful to "continue praying for me and for the next pope."

The traditional Sunday win-

dow appearance normally attracts a few thousand pilgrims and tourists, but this time city officials prepared for as many as 150,000 people seeking to witness one of Benedict's last opportunities to connect with the masses.

Authorities also used the

event as a kind of trial run for the crowds expected to flock to the square in the coming weeks for the next pope's installation.

Following tradition, Benedict's successor will make his first papal appearance by stepping onto the central balcony of St. Peter's Basilica on the square, shortly after puffs of white smoke from the Sistine Chapel chimney tell the world the cardinals have made their secret selection.

On Sunday, extra buses and subway trains ran from Rome's train stations to near the Vatican, and free shuttle vans offered lifts to the elderly or disabled.

Mayor Alemanno has asked Italy's government to put aside its austerity agenda and give Rome a few million euros (dollars) to help pay for security, garbage pickup and other logistics for the Vatican crowds.

On Sunday, several in the crowd were exhausted and shaken by their attempts to get into the square between the metal barriers. "You can't invite thousands of people and then bottleneck the entrance and exit to the square," said Gianbattista Di Rese, an Italian among the distressed. "Imagine if someone had had a bomb. There could have been hundreds of dead." He got into the square but was stymied trying to get out.

Tourists must go through metal detectors before entering St. Peter's Basilica, but there is no such security to stroll the square.

An Associated Press reporter saw many people give up. Some started to panic and yell at police to do something to ease the bottleneck.

Those who arrived hours before the pope appeared could enter the square with ease for a chance to join in the show of support for him. "We wanted to wish him well," said Amy Champion, a tourist from Wales. "It takes a lot of guts to take the job and even more guts ... to quit."



A pigeon flies in front of Pope Benedict XVI as he waves to the faithful during the Angelus noon prayer he celebrated from the window of his studio overlooking St. Peter's square, at the Vatican, Sunday, Feb. 17, 2013.

(AP Photo/Alessandra Tarantino)

Paris:

US lawmakers meet with Iranian exiles

JAMEY KEATEN

Associated Press

PARIS (AP) — With its militant wing no longer a terror organization as far as the U.S. government is concerned, an Iranian opposition group hosted a U.S. House delegation for the first time Sunday and briefed the lawmakers on the fallout of a deadly rocket attack at a refugee camp in Iraq.

The National Council of Resistance of Iran, a France-based Iranian opposition group, gave a raucous welcome at a Paris hotel

to the four representatives, with rhythmic clapping and chants of "Thank You!"

But the talks focused on a Feb. 9 rocket attack at a refugee camp in Iraq that houses many of members of Mujahedeen-e-Khalq, or MEK, the group's militant wing. Seven people died and dozens were wounded, the exile group said.

U.S. Rep. Dana Rohrabacher, a California Republican, accused Iraq of breaking its promise to help protect the 3,100 refugees who now live on the former American military base

known as Camp Liberty. He said he hopes the attack will help accelerate international efforts to resettle them abroad, while issuing a warning to the government of Iraqi Prime Minister Nouri al-Maliki.

"Put everybody on notice — and I think I speak for our whole delegation. ... If there is another attack on these helpless refugees by the government, obviously cleared by the government of Iraq, we will move in the United States Congress and put forward a resolution not only just condemn-

ing the act but declaring Prime Minister Maliki and his government state sponsors of terrorism," Rohrabacher told reporters. Iraq's Shiit-led, pro-Iranian government considers MEK a terrorist group and wants the international community to speed up the resettlement of the refugees elsewhere. NCRI officials say only a handful of refugees have been resettled. The refugee camp is meant to be a temporary way station while the United Nations works to find host countries for the refugees.

Submerged Sandy debris threatens tourism

WAYNE PARRY
Associated Press

MANTOLOKING, New Jersey (AP) —

On the surface, things look calm and placid. Just beneath the waterline, however, it's a different story.

Cars and sunken boats. Patio furniture. Pieces of docks. Entire houses. A grandfather clock, deposited in a marsh a mile (1.6 kilometers) from solid land. Hot tubs. Tons of sand. All displaced by Superstorm Sandy.

"We did a cleanup three weeks ago. Then when we went back the other day, you could still see junk coming up in the wash," said Paul Harris, president of the New Jersey Beach Buggy Association, which helps take care of beaches on which the group goes surf fishing. "They go and clean it again, and two days later, you have the same thing again. There's nothing you can do about it; you can't vacuum the ocean."

Coastal areas of New Jersey, New York and Connecticut are racing to remove untold tons of debris from waters hardest hit by the Oct. 29 storm before the summer swimming and boating seasons begin — two of the main reasons people flock there each year and the underpinning of the region's multibillion-dollar tourist industry.

The sunken debris presents an urgent safety issue. Swimmers could cut themselves on submerged junk, step on one of thousands of boardwalk nails ripped loose, or suffer neck or spinal injuries diving into solid objects. Boats could hit debris, pitching their occupants overboard, or in severe cases, sinking.

The cleanup won't be easy, fast or cheap.

"The amount of debris that needs to be removed is mind-boggling," New Jersey Gov. Chris Christie said, ticking off the statistics in his state: 1,400 vessels sunk, broken loose or destroyed during the storm. In just one shore town alone, Mantoloking, 58 buildings were washed into Barnegat Bay, along with eight vehicles, and a staggering amount

of sand carried from the ocean beaches into the bay.

"Everything you can imagine is sitting in our waterways," he said.

Barnegat Bay is likely to have some no-go zones in place for at least part of the spring and summer as cleanup work progresses. "Big Al" Wutkowski, a locally famous striped-bass fisherman who volunteers as the Barnegat Bay Guardian for the American Littoral Society environmental group, is worried about what still lurks beneath the waves.

"When people start putting their boats back in the water in April, I know they're going to start hitting stuff,"

retrieve a boat they plan to repair and keep, according to the state Department of Environmental Protection.

The state, which issued contracts last week for the water cleanup work, plans to seek full reimbursement from the Federal Emergency Management Agency as part of \$60 billion in Sandy relief approved by Congress.

Much of the work will involve cranes atop barges that pluck the largest debris from the bottom. Divers could be used for smaller pieces. Once that's done, many waterways will need to be dredged, with the sand placed back on

ment rides were found on beaches as far as 8 miles (13 kilometers) away in the days after the storm.

The Polar Bear Plunge, in which swimmers briefly dash into and out of the frigid surf to raise money for charity, was moved this year from Seaside Heights to Long Branch, a beach 24 miles (39 kilometers) to the north where hidden debris wasn't a concern.

New York and Connecticut face similar problems.

"We have everything from floating oil barrels, gasoline tanks, household hazardous waste products, buckets, tires, bathtubs, you name it," said Adrienne Esposito, executive director

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"But I don't believe that we should hold up his nomination any further, because I think it's (been) a reasonable amount of time to have questions answered." McCain and other Republicans have angered President Barack Obama by delaying him from rounding out his second-term national security team, which includes Hagel and John Brennan, the White House counterterrorism adviser who is awaiting confirmation to become CIA director. Former Massachusetts Sen.

John Kerry assumed his post as secretary of state at the beginning of February.

Critics contend that Hagel, who snubbed McCain by staying neutral in the 2008 presidential race between McCain and Obama, isn't supportive enough of U.S. ally Israel and is unreasonably sympathetic to Iran, which has defied international pressure to halt its pursuit of material that could be used to make nuclear weapons.

Hagel's nomination also became ensnared in Republican lawmakers' questioning of how the White House handled the Sept. 11 attack against a U.S. diplomatic mission in Benghazi, Libya, in which the U.S. ambassador and three other Americans were killed. Hagel was not involved in the administration's response. Republican senators also have challenged Hagel's past statements and votes on nuclear weapons, and his criticism of President George W. Bush's administration.

Republican Sen. Lindsey Graham, another leader of the opposition to Hagel, referred to a letter he received from Hagel in response to questions about past statements on Israel. Graham said that, as a result, he'll take Hagel "at his word, unless something new comes along." □



A destroyed home that was washed into Barnegat Bay from Mantoloking N.J. during Superstorm Sandy. States hit hard by Sandy are gearing up to remove tons of debris from waterways, including houses, vehicles, sunken boats, furniture, pieces of piers, decks and bulkheads — all of which must be removed before the summer swimming and boating season.

(AP Photo/Wayne Parry)

he said. "It's impossible not to hit stuff. It's also a lot shallower in places now. A lot of the lagoons are filled in with sand. People can't get their boats in or out."

Florida-based contractor AshBritt Environmental removed 42 boats from New Jersey waterways in recent weeks. Others were corralled by the State Police, or by private salvage companies acting on behalf of owners.

Property owners are not being held financially responsible for debris that washed or blew off their property into waterways unless they hire a private company to

beaches.

The private owners of an amusement pier that collapsed in Seaside Heights, New Jersey, pitching the Jet Star roller coaster into the ocean, are working with insurers to devise a plan to dismantle the ride and get it out of the ocean. Seaside Heights also plans to send teams of divers to scour the ocean bottom in popular swimming areas before letting people back into the water, fearing parts of the wooden pier, metal pieces from boardwalk rides and other debris still linger in the ocean. Cars from the pier's amuse-

ment rides were found on beaches as far as 8 miles (13 kilometers) away in the days after the storm.

"We're concerned not only about pollution, but boater safety," she said. "Come the spring, this stuff is going to be submerged partially or totally, but the boats are going to have some very serious issues."

Rob Weltner, president of Operation Splash, said the Freeport, New York, volunteer group has spent the past 20 years collecting 1 million pounds (450,000 kilograms) of debris, mostly from waterways on the south shore of Long Island. □



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100 Rhode Island fire victims remembered

MICHELLE R. SMITH

Associated Press

WEST WARWICK, Rhode Island (AP) — Survivors of a 2003 nightclub fire that killed 100 people and relatives of those killed huddled together in bitter cold Sunday at the site of the disaster to mark the 10th anniversary of the fire.

Some brought flowers and paid their respects at the handmade crosses that dot the site for each person who died. Others cried and spoke of missing their loved

ones and the difficulty of moving past such trauma.

"People that weren't here really don't understand why we can't let this stuff go. I was 30 seconds away from dying," said Walter Castle Jr., 39, a survivor who suffered third-degree burns in his lungs, throat and bronchial tubes. He said he lost many friends and was in counseling until 2009.

Recently, as the 10th anniversary approached, he began having terrible



Jason Zubee, left, and his wife Robin Zubee, right, both of North Kingstown, R.I., stand together Sunday, Feb. 17, 2013, in West Warwick, R.I., near makeshift memorials on the site of The Station nightclub fire. Zubee lost her cousin William Christopher Bonardi III in the 2003 blaze at the nightclub that killed 100 people.

(AP Photo/Steven Senne)

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nightmares and had to go back into counseling.

"It's just very tough," he said.

The anniversary of the blaze is Wednesday. The fire broke out when pyrotechnics for the rock band Great White ignited flammable packing foam that had been installed in The Station club as soundproofing. Last month, a fire at a nightclub in Brazil killed more than 230 people under circumstances that were eerily similar: A band's pyrotechnic display set fire to soundproofing foam.

Among those who spoke Sunday was former Gov. Don Carcieri, who took office the month before the fire and still gets choked up when speaking about it. He remembered the days families waited at a hotel for word that their loved ones' remains had been identified, and the anger everyone felt, asking how the tragedy could have happened. But he also remembered how people in Rhode Island, a state with a population of just 1 million, pulled together to help each other.

"At a time of our state's worst tragedy, in some sense, it was our people's finest hour," he said.

Angela Bogart, who was 19 when her mother, Jude Henault, was killed in the fire, said she has come to know and understand her mother more in the 10 years since she died, especially since she has become a mother herself.

"My mom lives in me in everything I do. I hear her voice wherever I go," she said. "When I walk hand-in-hand with my little girl, my mother is holding her other hand."

The ceremony also featured musical performances, a reading of the names of the people who died and 100 seconds of silence. While somber, the annual gathering at the fire site took on a more hopeful tone this year than in years past because a foundation set up to build a permanent memorial secured ownership of the site in September after years of trying. On Sunday, the Station Fire Memorial Foundation released final plans for the memorial. □

Obama, GOP prepare for budget battle

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That deal increased income tax rates for the wealthiest Americans while maintaining tax cuts for the middle class enacted during President George W. Bush's administration. It delayed the sequester from going into effect for two months.

"The question isn't whether we're going to insist on some position because that's the ideologically right position," McDonough said. "This should not be a social science experiment. This should be a question where we ask ourselves, what is most important to the economy, what is most important to the middle class families of this country, and that's the way the president is going to do this."

South Carolina's Sen. Lindsay Graham was among the Republicans on Sunday who recalled the president's position on the sequester in the fall.

"The president promised in the campaign sequestration would not happen. Now, he is allowing it to happen," Graham said on "Fox News Sunday."

"He's the commander-in-chief and on his watch, we're going to begin to unravel the finest military in the history of the world, at a time when we need it most," Graham, a member of the Senate Armed Services Committee added. "If you want to look at ways to find \$1.2 trillion in savings over the next decade, let's look at Obamacare. Let's don't destroy the military and just cut blindly across the board. There are many ways to do this."

However, Graham offered no specifics. The proposal put forth



House Speaker John Boehner speaks at his Capitol office, in Washington. President Barack Obama and congressional Republicans made no progress last week in heading off \$85 billion in budget-wide cuts that automatically start taking effect March 1.

(AP Photo/J.S. Applewhite)

by Senate Democrats would generate revenue from plugging some tax loopholes, such as for the oil and gas industry, businesses that have sent jobs overseas and a 30 percent tax rate for millionaires.

Rep. Paul Ryan, who chairs the House Budget Committee, advocates for plugging loopholes, but as part of a discussion on tax reform, not sequestration.

"Loopholes are necessary for tax reform," Ryan said on ABC's "This Week." "If you take them for spending, you're blocking tax reform and you're really not getting the deficit under control."

With the March 1 deadline fast approaching, Sen. Chuck Schumer, a New York Democrat and close ally of the White House, predicted that Republicans will eventually join Democrats to avoid the cuts.

"They have no choice," Schumer said on CNN's "State of the Union." "Their arguments are untenable and don't meet the favor of hardly anyone other than themselves and the special interests they're protecting." □

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Gun raffles stoke debate after school shooting

LYNNE TUOHY
Associated Press

CONCORD, New Hampshire (AP) — Police chiefs in New Hampshire wanted more money for their youth training program. A youth hockey team in North Dakota needed more ice time. Both saw giving away guns as the answer. From car dealerships to political parties to hockey teams to yes, even police chiefs, gun giveaways are an attractive way to make money or draw in customers. But in the wake of the deadly shooting rampage in a Connecticut elementary school, such raffles are drawing criticism as the ease of obtaining firearms fuels a nationwide debate over gun control measures. The New Hampshire Association of Chiefs of Police is raffling off a gun every day in May, including a Ruger AR-15-style rifle with a 30-round magazine similar to the one used in the Sandy Hook Elementary School shooting that killed 20 children and six educators in December. The players in West Fargo's Youth Hockey Association will raffle off 200 guns and an all-terrain vehicle next month. Up for grabs are shotguns,

handguns, hunting rifles and semi-automatic rifles. Both raffles were planned long before the shooting in Newtown invigorated calls for increased gun control. That didn't stop critics from blasting the raffles as, at best, in poor taste and, at worst, criminal.

John Rosenthal, founder and director of the Massachusetts-based Stop Handgun Violence, called the chiefs' raffle "insane" and "criminally irresponsible." "In 33 states — including Maine, New Hampshire and Vermont — the winner of this AR-15 can turn around the same day and sell it to anyone without an ID or background check," Rosenthal said. "They should cancel their raffle and give away a nice mountain bike or snowmobile."

Jonathan Lowy, director of the legal action program at the Brady Center to Prevent Gun Violence, said he knows of no state in which the raffle would be illegal. But "having these gun giveaways and gun raffles can trivialize the seriousness of

the chiefs' raffle, other giveaways have had similarly inauspicious timing. After a 2011 shooting rampage in Arizona wounded Rep. Gabrielle Giffords and killed six others, the county Republican Party raffled off a Glock handgun to raise money for voter outreach. Its slogan was "Help Pima GOP get out the vote and maybe help yourself to a new Glock." The Republican Party's interim county chairman said at the time he didn't think there was anything inappropriate about the promotion. Missouri state Rep. John McCaherty raised campaign funds last August by raffling off an AR-15 semi-automatic rifle, a month after a similar gun was used in the Aurora, Colorado, movie theater shooting that killed 12 people and wounded 58. McCaherty didn't return calls seeking comment. The owner of an Atlanta-area sporting goods store doesn't understand the outrage. Last November, Jay Wallace offered anyone who brought their "I Voted" sticker a raffle ticket to win a handgun or rifle from his store, Adventure Outdoors. □



Guns are displayed on a table on display during the annual New York State Arms Collectors Association Albany Gun Show at the Empire State Plaza Convention Center, in Albany, N.Y. Car dealerships, political parties, hockey teams and, police chiefs see gun giveaways as a way to make money or draw in customers, even after the mass school shooting in Connecticut in December fueled anew the debate over gun buying restrictions.

(AP Photo/Philip Kamrass)

firearms," Lowy said. In a letter posted on the chiefs association website, Salem Police Chief Paul Donovan extended his sympathies to the families of those killed in Newtown but stressed it and other tragic shootings "are con-

Woman killed same day sister sat behind Obama

CHICAGO (AP) — An 18-year-old Chicago woman was killed on the same day her sister sat on the stage behind President Barack Obama, listening to him push for gun control legislation. Janay McFarlane was shot once in the head around 11:30 p.m. Friday in North Chicago, Lake County Coroner Thomas Rudd told the Chicago Sun-Times. McFarlane, the mother of a 3-month-old boy, was in

the Chicago suburb visiting friends and family. North Chicago police said two people are being questioned in connection with McFarlane's death, but no charges have been filed yet. "I really feel like somebody cut a part of my heart out," Angela Blakely, McFarlane's mother, said. Blakely said the bullet that killed McFarlane was meant for a friend. Hours earlier, McFarlane's 14-year-old sister sat feet

from Obama at Hyde Park Career Academy, where he spoke about gun violence and paid tribute to Hadiya Pendleton, the 15-year-old honor student fatally shot last month in a South Side park. Police have said it was a case of mistaken identity, and two people have been charged. Pendleton's death was one of more than 40 homicides in Chicago in January, a total that made it the deadliest

January in the city in more than a decade. Pendleton, a drum majorette, had recently performed during Obama's inauguration in Washington and the slaying happened about a mile (1.6 kilometers) from his Chicago home. Blakely told the newspaper that Janay McFarlane had been affected by Pendleton's death. "She always said after Hadiya Pendleton got killed, 'Momma that's so sad,'" Blakely said.

"She was always touched by any kid that got killed. She was always touched by mothers who couldn't be there for their babies because they were gone." McFarlane was supposed to graduate from an alternative school this spring, Blakely said, and wanted to go into the culinary arts. "I'm just really, truly just trying to process it — knowing that I'm not taking my baby home anymore," Blakely said. □



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White House seeking bill on immigration

MICHAEL D. SHEAR

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WASHINGTON – The White House is working on early drafts of a comprehensive bill that would offer 11 million illegal immigrants a pathway to citizenship along the lines of the principles that the president laid out in Las Vegas several weeks ago, administration officials said.

President Barack Obama revealed last month that his administration had already drafted immigration legislation.

But he said he preferred to let a bipartisan coalition of lawmakers work out their own bill that could also tighten border security and provide employers with a way to verify the citizenship status of workers.

White House aides said that Obama remained pleased with the progress being made on Capitol Hill toward a complete overhaul of the nation's immigration system. But they said he would be prepared to submit legislation if the effort among lawmakers stalls.

"The president has made clear the principles upon which he believes any common-sense immigration reform effort should be based," Clark Stevens, a White House spokesman, said in a statement. "We continue to work in support of a bipartisan effort, and while the president has made clear he will move forward if Congress fails to act, progress continues to be made and the administration has not prepared a final bill to submit."

On Saturday, USA Today reported that it had obtained portions of the president's draft legislation.

California eases its tone on Latinos

JENNIFER MEDINA

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LOS ANGELES – A generation ago, California voters approved a ballot initiative that was seen as the most anti-immigrant law in the nation. Immigrants who had come to the country il-

many in California sense that the country is just beginning to go through the same evolution the state experienced over the past two decades. For a generation of Republicans, Gov. Pete Wilson's barrages on the impact of immigration in the 1990s spoke to their

nos were the largest ethnic group applying to the University of California system. Towns that just a decade ago were largely white now have Latino majorities. Latinos make up an important power base not only in urban centers like Los Angeles, but also in places that

and 2000 is almost exactly what will happen to the rest of the country over the next 30 years."

Proposition 187, the 1994 ballot initiative, prompted thousands of immigrants to register to vote and ignited a generation of activists, including dozens who now hold public office or run immigrant-rights organizations that lobby for change in federal laws.

Latinos had long been concentrated in the urban centers and agricultural areas of the state. But they have continued to move to the suburbs, particularly in the Inland Empire, the suburbs east of Los Angeles. There, Latinos have driven rapid growth over the past decade and make up more than two-thirds of many cities. Experts estimate that more than half of the immigrants who entered the country illegally have been in the United States for more than a decade.

Even as the demographics changed steadily for decades, the shift in voters came more slowly. But in the most recent election, exit polls showed that Latinos made up 25 percent of the vote in California, compared with 9 percent in 1994, Baldassare said.

In the Legislature, which has 120 seats, the Latino caucus now consists of 24 members, more than double what it was two decades ago.

Ricardo Lara, the chairman of the caucus, said he traced his own political involvement directly to the anti-immigration sentiment in the 1990s.

"I was a freshman in college, and suddenly there was a blatant attack on people like my parents," said Lara, who grew up in East Los Angeles with other Mexican immigrants.



Patriotic High School students after school in Glen Avon, east of Los Angeles, Calif., Feb. 14, 2013. Latinos now make up more than two-thirds of many cities in that region. (Monica Almeida/The New York Times)

legally would be ineligible to receive prenatal care, and their children would be barred from public schools. But the law, which was later declared unconstitutional by the federal courts, never achieved the goal of its backers: to turn back the tide of immigrants pouring into the state. Instead, since the law was approved in 1994, the political and social reality has changed drastically across the state. Now, more California residents than ever before say that immigrants are a benefit to the state, according to public opinion polls from the Public Policy Institute of California. As Congress begins debating an overhaul of the immigration system,

uneasiness with the way the state was changing. Now many California Republicans point to that as the beginning of their downfall. Today, party leaders from both sides, and from all over the state, are calling for a softer approach and a wholesale change in federal policies.

The state's changing attitudes are driven, in large part, by demographics. In 1990, Latinos made up 30 percent of the state's population; they will make up 40 percent – more than any other ethnic group – by the end of this year, and 48 percent by 2050, according to projections made by the state this month. This year, for the first time, Lati-

were once hostile to outsiders. There are dozens of city councils with a majority of Latino members; a Mexican-American is the mayor of Los Angeles and another is the leader of the state Assembly. Nearly all of the 15 California Republicans in Congress represent districts where at least a quarter of the residents are Latino.

"The political calculus has changed dramatically," said Manuel Pastor, a demographer and professor of American studies at the University of Southern California. "Immigrants are an accepted part of public life here. And California is America fast-forward. What happened to our demographics between 1980

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UN envoy backs Syrian opposition's call for talks

HAMZA HENDAWI
JAMAL HALABY
Associated Press
AMMAN, Jordan (AP) — A Syrian opposition leader's call for dialogue is a test for the intentions of President Bashar Assad, the international envoy to Syria said Sunday, as fighting raged between rebels and government forces in at least three Syrian provinces. Lakhdar Brahimi, the joint U.N.-Arab League envoy to Syria, said the proposal by Mouaz al-Khatib, the president of the opposition coalition, "has opened the door and challenges the Syrian government to fulfill its often-repeated assertion that it is ready for dialogue and a peaceful settlement."

"This initiative is on the table and will be on the table," Brahimi told reporters in Cairo following talks with Arab League chief Nabil Elaraby. "We believe that if a dialogue begins in one of the U.N. headquarters, at least initially, between the opposition and an acceptable

delegation from the Syrian government, it will be a start for getting out of the dark tunnel in which Syria is placed," Brahimi added. In a statement Friday, the



Arab League chief Nabil Elaraby, right, talks with U.N.-Arab League envoy to Syria Lakhdar Brahimi during their meeting at the Arab League headquarters, in Cairo, Egypt, Sunday, Feb. 17, 2013.

(AP Photo/Nasser Nasser)

opposition's main umbrella group, the Syrian National Coalition, said it would not allow President Bashar Assad or members of his security services to participate in talks to end the crisis. It did not rule out, however, dialogue with some

members of his ruling Baath party, saying it welcomed talks with "honorable people" from all parts of society who "have not been embroiled in the crimes

against the Syrian people." Still, neither side has proposed a concrete plan for the talks. Meanwhile, Syrian Parliament Speaker Jihad Laham told fellow lawmakers in a session Sunday that dialogue is the path that must

be pursued under a political agenda Assad proposed in January to end the nation's 23-month-old conflict.

"All Syrians must work within the framework of this program to resolve the crisis in the country," Laham said, pleading to "all Syrians, from all sects and orientations, to confront the terrorism facing us."

Addressing the same session, Syrian Prime Minister Wael al-Halqi said the difficult conditions caused by the war and international sanctions placed on Syria "are beyond the capacity and ability of any country to bear." He said the economic blockade imposed by the European Union, the United States and some Arab states has had a "negative impact" on the health sector, although he did not elaborate.

Rebel attacks, he added, have damaged 2,500 high schools and caused serious power outages, reducing electricity distribution by up to 60 percent nationwide. He also blamed a shrink-

ing oil supply — which he said now meets around 40 percent of the country's needs — on rebel attacks on oil refineries. Also Sunday, anti-regime activists reported sectarian clashes in a rural area between the Syrian town of Qusair and the Lebanese border. Clashes have grown common in the area between its Shiite and Sunni Muslim villages, whose residents generally back different sides in Syria's civil war. Most of the rebels fighting to topple Assad are from Syria's Sunni majority, while many of the country's Shiites stand by the regime. The area's residents also have clan and family ties to communities across the porous border with Lebanon. Activist Hadi Abdullah said via Skype that Shiite gunmen tried to enter three Sunni villages early Saturday, leading to clashes with rebels. Five rebels were killed in the clashes, he said, and seven Sunni civilians were killed in shelling, adding that rebels thought they had killed 12 Shiites.

Venezuela FM open to improved ties with Washington

C. TOOTHAKER
Associated Press
CARACAS, Venezuela (AP) — Venezuela's foreign minister, Elias Java, said Sunday that President Hugo

Chavez has asked his diplomats to seek improved relations with the United States.

Chavez has had a rocky relationship with Washing-

ton for years, though the United States remains the top buyer of oil from Venezuela.

"We want to have a good relationship with the United States, but we are not desperate," said Java, speaking in an interview broadcast on the local Televen TV channel.

The U.S. Embassy in Caracas has been without an ambassador since July 2010 when Chavez rejected the U.S. nominee for ambassador, accusing him of making disrespectful remarks

about Venezuela's government. That led Washington to revoke the visa of the Venezuelan ambassador. Java said Chavez wants Venezuela's ambassador to the Organization of American States, Roy Chaderton, to talk with officials in Washington about the possibility of restoring ambassadors to embassies in both countries.

"It's an effort that President Chavez has asked us to continue making," Java said. But Java noted that Venezuela is not in a hurry

to have an American envoy in Caracas, saying: "We have learned to live without a U.S. ambassador."

Since taking office in 1999, Chavez has regularly accused U.S. officials of conspiring against his government and criticized Washington's foreign policy. Chavez, a self-proclaimed revolutionary, has also forged strong ties with U.S. adversaries including Syrian President Bashar Assad and Iranian President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad.

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7 foreigners kidnapped in north Nigeria

JON GAMBRELL
SHEHU SAULAWA
Associated Press
BAUCHI, Nigeria (AP) — Gunmen attacked a camp for a construction company in rural northern Nigeria, killing a guard and kidnapping seven foreign workers from Britain, Greece, Italy, Lebanon and the Philippines, authorities said Sunday, in the biggest kidnapping yet in a region under attack by Islamic extremists.

The attack Saturday night happened in Jama'are, a town in Bauchi state. There, the gunmen first attacked a local prison, burning two police trucks, Bauchi state police spokesman Hassan Muhammed told The Associated Press.

The gunmen then targeted a workers' camp for Lebanese construction company Setraco, which is building a road in the area, Muhammed said. The gunmen shot dead a guard at the camp before kidnapping the foreign workers, the spokesman said.

"The gunmen came with explosives, which they used to break some areas," Muhammed said.

Kosovo celebrates 5 years of independence

NEBI QENA

Associated Press

PRISTINA, Kosovo (AP) — Ethnic Albanians in Kosovo celebrated the fifth anniversary of their declaration of independence from Serbia with a parade of police

rade since the end of the 1998-99 war with Serbia.

The country's lightly armed Kosovo Security Force paraded in armored vehicles alongside firefighters and special police units wearing masks to conceal their

Spain oppose that because they reject Kosovo's independence.

Thousands of people flooded the capital, Pristina, to join the festivities, which were accompanied by traditional music.

are free now."

Nearly 100 nations have recognized Kosovo's independence, but Serbia claims the territory as its own. The European Union is currently mediating talks between the two former foes.

Prime Minister Hashim Thaci, a former rebel who fought against Serbia, said the country is seeking EU membership, but warned the goal was still distant.

"The Republic of Kosovo is on the right path to the European Union, but we still need to work and transform Kosovo into a developed European state," he said minutes before the parade started.

The celebrations come just days after the EU published a scathing report highlighting Kosovo's failure to fight organized crime and corruption. The report was drafted to list what Kosovo needs in order to have visa requirements waived when traveling into the EU zone. But it also focuses on the need to implement the rule of law.

"I don't think it was a surprise to Kosovo," Samuel Zbogor, the top EU official in Kosovo, told The Associated Press in an interview Friday.



A Kosovo Security Force honor guard leads the parade in the center of Pristina marking the 5th anniversary since Kosovo seceded from Serbia Sunday, Feb. 17, 2013. Serbia rejects Kosovo's independence. Banner on wall at right shows the late Kosovo leader Ibrahim Rugova.

(AP Photo/Visar Kryeziu)

and armed forces in the main square of the capital Sunday.

It's the first time such forces have been used in a pa-

identities. The NATO-trained force has 2,500 members and wants to become an army, but alliance members such as Greece and

"We have made some progress, but not the way we hoped," 65-year-old resident Ilaz Rama said. "The main thing is that we

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Masked intruders raid Greek gold mine company

COSTAS KANTOURIS

Associated Press

SKOURIES, Greece (AP) — About 40 masked attackers raided the facilities of a prospective gold mine in northern Greece overnight Sunday, setting machinery and offices alight, authorities said.

A police officer said employees told them the intruders tied up two security guards and doused them with gasoline, threatening to set them on fire. One of the guards was kicked and sought hospital treatment for bruises and respiratory problems, while the remaining 10 guards employed by the company at the facility fled, the officer said on condition of anonymity because he wasn't authorized to speak to the media.

There has long been opposition to the prospect of a gold mine and processing plant being built at Skouries in the Halkidiki peninsula, with some residents objecting to what they say will be the destruction of the environment and of pristine forest in the area, leading to the loss of tourism and other local activities such as farming, the rearing of livestock and fishing.

The mining company, Hellas Gold, is 95 percent owned by Canadian mining company Eldorado Gold Inc. The Greek government has been eager for the foreign investment as it struggles through a deep financial crisis.

But the dispute has led to frequent protests in the area, with tear gas and firebombs used and resi-

dents trading accusations with the company about heavy-handed reactions and the use of violence.

"Hellas Gold SA regretfully announces an unprovoked attack at its installations in Skouries ... Considerable material damages were

since it took charge of the mines, in February 2012, it tripled the workforce from 400 to 1,200 permanent employees," the company said in a statement released later Sunday.

"We do not understand these attacks ... we call on

environmental safety exceed Greek and EU standards.

The attackers left the area on foot and placed logs on a road to delay firefighters, the officer said. Police believe the attackers used several getaway vehicles stationed some distance from the mine site, the officer said.

Police said they have detained 27 people for questioning early Sunday morning but all were subsequently released.

In a later statement Sunday evening, police said they have detained a further four persons and are looking for four more. They say they have also found a full face mask, a surgical mask and bloodstains. Forensics experts are examining evidence at the site.

Mine's supporters say that 1,200 jobs have already been created in an area that is especially hard hit by long-term unemployment. About 5,000 people also applied for an additional 200 jobs at the mine, said Giorgos Arvanitis, general secretary of the local miners' union.



An employee of Hellas Gold, looks at a burnt mining facility near the village of Skouries, located on the northern peninsula of Halkidiki Greece, on Sunday, Feb. 17 2013. (AP Photo/Nikolas Giakoumidis)

done without — fortunately — loss of life. This incidence is an escalation of the attacks against us and is not surprising...The company takes for granted that it is supported by the majority of the locals in Halkidiki ...

the authorities to defend legality and support any investment effort in our country, which is of crucial importance for its economic recovery," the statement says. It adds that the company's measures to ensure

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Explosion kills 84 in Pakistan market

DECLAN WALSH

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KARACHI, Pakistan — The death toll from a devastating explosion that ripped through a crowded market in the southwestern city of Quetta this weekend rose to 84 people, as Shiite leaders called for the immediate arrest of the attackers, according to police and rescue officials.

The attack occurred in a neighborhood dominated by Hazaras, a Shiite ethnic minority that has suffered numerous attacks at

the hands of Sunni militant death squads in recent years.

A previous attack on Jan. 10, when a Sunni group bombed a snooker hall in Quetta, killed almost 100 Hazaras, prompting domestic and international outrage.

The police said that Saturday's bomb was apparently set off by a remote-controlled device, hidden inside a water supply truck. The explosion caused a building to collapse, damaged two other neighbor-

ing buildings, and a left a crater 12 feet deep and 6 feet wide.

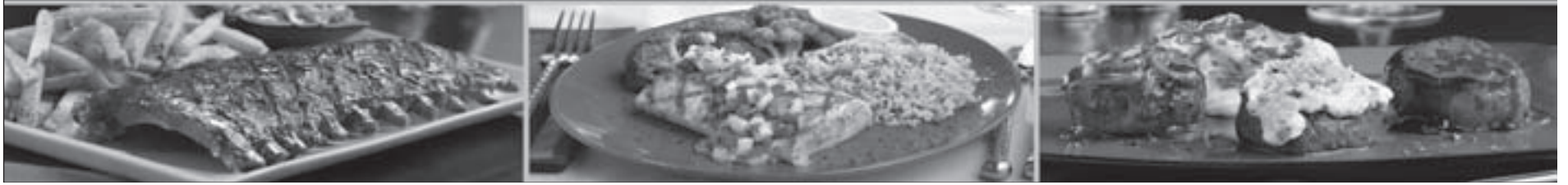
Local hospitals declared an emergency as rescue efforts were hampered by angry crowds at the bomb site, where distraught Hazaras prevented the police, reporters and rescuers from reaching the scene.

Prime Minister Raja Pervaiz Ashraf quickly condemned the attack, emphasizing the government's resolve to fight "such dastardly acts" and vowing to bring the perpetrators to justice.

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Ecuador leader celebrates 2nd re-election

GABRIELA MOLINA
GONZALO SOLANO
Associated Press
QUITO, Ecuador (AP) — President Rafael Correa, a dynamic but polemical leftist who has spent heavily on the poor, confidently celebrated his second re-election Sunday even before the first official results were announced.

An exit poll gave the incumbent, who first took office in 2007, 61 percent against 20 percent for his closest challenger, former banker Guillermo Lasso.

A beaming Correa appeared on state TV hugging jubilant supporters at the Carondelet presidential palace less than an hour after polls closed. Flanked by his immediate family and closest aides, he addressed a cheering crowd from its balcony.

"This victory is yours. It belongs to our families, to our wife, to our friends, our neighbors, the entire nation," Correa said. "We are only here to serve you. Nothing for us. Everything for you, a people who have become dignified in being free."

None of the other six candidates won more than 5 percent, according to the poll by Cedatos-Gallup. It interviewed 15,000 voters and had a 3.7 percentage point error margin.

The 48-year-old Correa has raised living standards for the lower classes and widened the welfare state with region-leading social spending. Critics including international human rights group call him a bully

To avoid a runoff, Correa needed a simple majority or 40 percent of the vote plus a 10-point margin over the No. 2 vote-getter. A champion of big government in the Chavez mold but more respectful of pri-

his "21st century socialism," such as a 5 percent tax on capital removed from Ecuador.

Among voters casting their ballot for Correa in Quito was a grateful Jomaira Espinosa, 18.

"Before (Correa), my family didn't have enough to eat" and her father couldn't find work, she said. Now her father has a job as a public servant and she expects to be able to study for free at a university thanks to Correa's programs.

But Correa's critics say his "citizens' revolution" has been accompanied by his arbitrary wielding of a near-monopoly on state power against anyone who threatens it.

German Calapucha, a 29-year-old accountant,

said he voted against Correa because he's tired of the president's imperiousness.

"He thinks that because he wins elections he has the right to mistreat people," Calapucha said. "I want a country where people respect each other."

Correa has eroded the influence of opposition parties, the Roman Catholic Church and the news media and used criminal libel law to try to silence opposition journalists.

Critics lament his staking of courts with friendly judges and the government's prosecution of indigenous leaders for organizing protests against Correa's opening up of Ecuador to large-scale mining without their consent.



President Rafael Correa waves to supporters as he leaves a polling station after voting in Quito, Ecuador, Sunday, Feb. 17, 2013. (AP Photo/Martin Jaramillo)

as intolerant of dissent as his Venezuelan ally, Hugo Chavez. Correa has brought uncharacteristic political stability to this oil-exporting nation of 14.6 million people that cycled through seven presidents in the decade before him.

He won re-election in April 2009 after voters approved a constitutional rewrite that mandated a new ballot, and he would be legally barred from running again if victorious.

vate property, Correa has endeared himself to the poor and lower middle class by making education and health care more accessible, building or improving 7,820 kilometers (4,870 miles) of highways and, the government says, creating 95,400 jobs in the past four years.

Lasso had promised a government friendlier to foreign investment, lower taxes on job-creating companies and a rolling back elements of what Correa calls

Jamaicans blast "surprise" tax package

KINGSTON, Jamaica (AP) — Jamaica's private sector is blasting the government for a "surprise announcement" of a supplementary \$167 million tax package.

Most of the new taxes announced last week by Finance Minister Peter Phillips begin April 1, the start of the new fiscal year. The

measures include hikes in stamp duty, dividend and education taxes.

On Sunday, the Private Sector Organization of Jamaica said they were disappointed that such a "massive package would be pushed on to the Jamaican people" without first consulting stakeholders.

Phillips says Jamaica is compelled to raise taxes as part of the actions demanded from the government ahead of finalizing a new deal with the International Monetary Fund.

On Friday, the IMF said it has reached a tentative agreement to authorize a \$750 million deal for the debt-strapped country.

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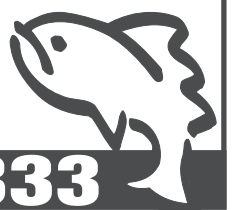


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No central agency oversees, inspects cruise ships

CURT ANDERSON
Associated Press

BAHAMAS/MIAMI (AP) — A byzantine maze of maritime rules and regulations, fragmented oversight and a patchwork quilt of nations that do business with cruise lines make it tough for consumers to assess the health and safety record of the ship they are about to board in what for many is the vacation of a lifetime. Want to know about a ship's track record for being clean? Want to assess how sanitary the food is? It's not that easy to find, in part because there's no one entity or country that oversees or regulates the industry with its fleet of ships that are like mini cities floating at sea.

In the case of Carnival Cruise Lines, the owner of the Carnival Triumph that spent days in the Gulf of Mexico disabled after an engine fire, the company is incorporated in Panama, its offices are based in Miami and its ships fly under the Bahamian flag — a matrix that is not unusual in the cruise line industry.

For potential passengers seeking ship information, there's no central database that can be viewed to determine a track record of safety or health inspections. No one agency regulates everything from the cruise line's mechanical worthiness to the sanitation of its kitchens. The U.S. Coast Guard inspects each cruise ship that docks in the U.S. every year for a range of issues, from operation of backup generators to the lifeboats. The U.S. Centers for Disease

Control and Prevention maintains a database of recent disease outbreaks and other health inspection information for cruise ships. Had Triumph vacationers looked up information about the cruise ship through those two agencies before boarding, they would have found mostly clean marks and few red flags.

And when something goes

Corp., ran aground off the coast of Giglio, Italy, Rockefeller held a Commerce Committee hearing to examine deficiencies in the cruise line industry's compliance with federal safety, security, and environmental standards and review industry regulations.

"As I remarked then, they seem to have two lives: One is at port, where the Coast Guard can monitor

gers described nightmarish conditions on board: overflowing toilets, long lines for a short supply of food, foul odors, and tent cities where vacationers slept on deck. Tugboats slowly towed the 14-story vessel to Mobile, Alabama. It arrived there late Thursday.

Before a ship like the Triumph sets sail, it's possible — but not easy — to find information about past inci-

from a Jan. 28 incident involving a short in a connection box of one of the ship's generators.

Fires — though not all as major as the Triumph's — happen virtually every year on cruise ships. There were 79 onboard blazes from 1990 to 2011, according to a list compiled by Ross Klein, a professor who specializes in cruise industry issues at Memorial University in Newfoundland, Canada. In 2010, the IMO adopted rules that require any large cruise ship built after July 1 of that year to have a separate, redundant system able to maintain the ship's propulsion, steering and so forth in case one engine is disabled by fire. The rules also mandate that ships be capable of maintaining basic services such as sanitation, water, food and lights in such circumstances.

The Triumph was built in 1999 and isn't covered by the rules, as is the case for most ships among major cruise lines. Experts say the Triumph might have been able to limp into port more quickly if it had the newer systems, but retrofitting is costly and time-consuming. "Provided the emergency generators worked and had enough power, they would have been able to return to port under their own power, but much slower," said Andrew O. Coggins, Jr., a Pace University management professor who focuses on hospitality and tourism industries.

"Once Carnival has evaluated the full cost of this incident," he added, "it might be cost effective to retrofit their older ships." □



Crew members watch the activity on the dock after the Carnival Triumph was towed to the cruise terminal in Mobile, Ala.

(AP Photo/John David Mercer)

wrong, as it did on Triumph, there are limits to how much the Coast Guard can investigate.

These are not new issues — they had been raised by members of Congress before the Triumph incident. "This horrible situation involving the Carnival Triumph is just the latest example in a long string of serious and troubling incidents involving cruise ships," said Sen. Jay Rockefeller, who led a committee hearing on cruise safety last year. Last year, after the Costa Concordia, also owned by Miami-based Carnival

their operations; the other is at sea where, it appears once they are beyond three nautical miles from shore, the world is theirs," Rockefeller said in letter he wrote this week to Admiral Robert J. Papp Jr., the commandant of the Coast Guard. "The Carnival Triumph incident only serves to further validate this view."

The Triumph left Galveston, Texas, on Feb. 7 for a four-day cruise to Cozumel, Mexico. An engine-room fire paralyzed the ship early Sunday, leaving it adrift in the Gulf of Mexico. Passen-

dents and safety or health issues. The Coast Guard also has a database, known as the U.S. Coast Guard Maritime Information Exchange, with inspections and any deficiencies found aboard ships, dating to when the vessels entered service. A search on the exchange's website for the Triumph turns up its certifications for things like passenger safety and pollution prevention as well as inspections. No violations or red flags are immediately evident.

Searching a little deeper, the most recent report shows a propulsion issue



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Aruba Tourism Authority says 'Masha Danki': Loyal visitors honored at the Divi Aruba All Inclusive!

EAGLE BEACH - Recently the Aruba Tourism Authority honored a group of Goodwill Ambassadors at the Divi Aruba All Inclusive Resort! The honorees were Michael and Patrick Szczepanik, residents of Lake City, Michigan, Joseph and Francis Harnedy, residents

of Framingham, Massachusetts, and Anne and Windy Hamlin, residents of the United States!

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Resort. The top reasons for returning provided by the honorees were they consider

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ORANJESTAD - With a joyful heart Petra M.C. van den Berg, certified life coach and researcher, has developed a program for leadership after many years of applied coaching and experience as a researcher/analyst in the field of awareness. She aims to provide her clients with a new perspective during an enlightening program that will start on Tuesday, February 19. You will discover skills and tools to improve awareness, you will learn what is best for you, what are your goals and how to approach the people around you. Petra's motto is: "At the deepest level, a leader is awake in yourself", which applies to your business, family and home situation as well as your private and personal life. The training will be taught in English at Spirit of Aruba; for information please surf to www.healingwellformulas.com /

www.spiritofaruba.com, or call 593-3703 or 588-9551.

"Do you know that when you focus on a result, there is already something happening beneath the surface?" says Petra. "Something is about to happen because you are already working on a result or awareness.

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sight in yourself.

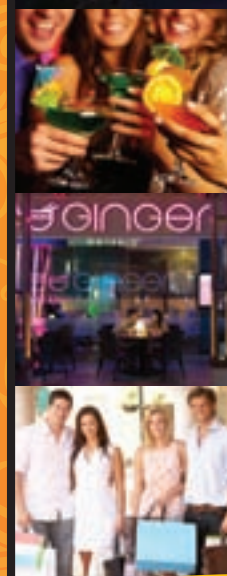
You will also learn to awaken the leader inside of you, a tool which you can use throughout your life. We will do result-driven exercises to get your deepest desires and goals moving in order for you to accomplish them. Everything is permanently bound in unity. Everything is there already on a pure awareness and energy level. You become the conscious creator in your life, personal- and business-wise.

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CASINO AND SHOPS

At the Casino at the Radisson:

Raymond Jesienski wins big with a Straight Flush!

PALM BEACH - There is never a dull moment, at the Casino at the Radisson, my second home, says Raymond Jesienski, a visitor from Georgia, holding up his 3-4-5-6-7 of spades, which earned him a jackpot of \$5,022 on Caribbean Stud Poker. Jesienski and long time friend of casino supervisor, Steve Whing, is seen here celebrating his skill and luck, as photographed by Chantal Cha Young, Casino Sales & Marketing Coordinator. The Caribbean Stud Poker Jackpot showed \$46,065 before Jesienski took a bite out of it.

The Casino at the Radisson also boasts a \$28,832 bingo progressive jackpot and a \$52,564 bad beat jackpot, available for Poker players, at the casino's busy Poker Room.

In March during Aruba's Nation Day weekend, the casino will be hosting three consecutive bingo sessions, on the 16th, the 17th, and the 18th, which is the island's Aruba Dag. Chantal reports that a great number of fun activities are scheduled for that holiday weekend, and the general public is invited. □



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Danica Patrick grabs Daytona 500 pole

Danica Patrick removes her earplugs by her car on pit road after qualifying for the NASCAR Daytona 500 Sprint Cup Series auto race at Daytona International Speedway, Sunday, Feb. 17, 2013, in Daytona Beach, Fla. Patrick won the pole, becoming the first woman to secure the top spot for any Sprint Cup race.

Associated Press
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Spain's Rafael Nadal celebrates at the end of the Brazil Open ATP tournament final tennis match against Argentina's David Nalbandian in Sao Paulo, Brazil, Sunday, Feb. 17, 2013. Nadal won 6-2, 6-3.
Associated Press

Nadal wins 1st title since return

TALES AZZONI

AP Sports Writer

SAO PAULO (AP) — Rafael Nadal beat David Nalbandian 6-2, 6-3 in the final of the Brazil Open on Sunday, winning his first title since returning from a seven-month layoff to treat his left knee.

Nadal thrust his arms into the air and pumped his fist after Nalbandian sent a shot long to give the Spaniard his second title at the indoor clay-court tournament. He also won the event in 2005.

"I'll definitely enjoy this one because of all the problems that I've gone through with the knee," Nadal said. "When I won for the first time here I was just starting and hopefully this will mark a new beginning."

Continued on page 22



John Merrick kisses the winner's trophy after his victory in the Northern Trust Open golf tournament at Riviera Country Club in the Pacific Palisades area of Los Angeles on Sunday, Feb. 17, 2013.

(AP Photo/Reed Saxon)

Merrick gets his first win in Riviera

DOUG FERGUSON

The Associated Press

LOS ANGELES (AP) -- John Merrick was a young face in the crowd at Riviera for so many years, dreaming of one day playing the fabled course on the PGA Tour. On Sunday, he did better than that. He won on it. Merrick hit two clutch shots that led to two pars in a sudden-death playoff and won the Northern Trust Open on Sunday when Charlie Beljan missed a 5-foot par putt on the sec-

ond extra hole.

Merrick, who closed with a 2-under 69, became only the ninth player make this tournament is first PGA Tour victory. It could not have come at a better place. Merrick grew up in Long Beach, attended this event as a kid and went to school down the street at UCLA.

"I can't put this into words," he said off the 10th green, his eyes welling with tears. "Growing up as a kid, coming out here, I just wanted to play this tourna-

ment."

It was a tough finish for Beljan, famous for having an anxiety attack when he won at Disney late last year. He holed an 18-foot birdie putt on the 18th hole, similar to the theatrics provided last year by Phil Mickelson and Keegan Bradley, to close with a 4-under 67 and wind up in a playoff. He had to make a tough 6-foot putt for par on No. 18 on the first playoff hole. Going to the par-4 10th, 315 yards of sheer nerves,

Beljan drove long and left, and his chip didn't reach the green. He putted his third shot just above the hole, and watched it slide by on the left for a bogey. Beljan also made bogey on the 10th hole in regulation. The key for Merrick might have been on the par-5 17th in regulation, when he pulled his second shot from a bunker toward the eucalyptus trees, only to find that he had just enough of a gap to go at the green and escape with par. □

All Star Weekend:

Ross throws down, beats Evans in dunk contest



Terrence Ross of the Toronto Raptors slams during NBA All-Star Saturday Night basketball Saturday, Feb. 16, 2013, in Houston. (AP Photo/Eric Gay)

CHRIS DUNCAN

The Associated Press

HOUSTON (AP) -- Terrence Ross had to settle his nerves at the start of the All-Star dunk contest. By the end, he was calming down a ball boy he needed as a prop for his winning slam. The 6-foot-6 Toronto rookie leapfrogged Michael Costo, the son of Twitter CEO Dick Costolo, whipped the ball between his legs and hammered home a one-handed dunk to beat defending champion Jeremy Evans in the climax to All-Star Saturday.

"I told him the day before that I was going to jump over him, but I never told him I was going to go through the legs," Ross said. "He was kind of nervous. When I first grabbed him, he said, 'You're not going to hit me, right?' I said, 'No, I'm not going to hit you.'"

Ross seemed to be unsure of himself in the beginning, botching his first three dunk attempts in the first round.

The crowd exploded when he finally pulled it off - flicking the ball behind his back on the way up and hammering home a one-handed dunk. He earned a perfect 50 and immediately relaxed. "This is honestly my first really big dunk contest, so I was nervous," said Ross, the eighth overall pick in last year's draft out of Washington. "And not making a dunk didn't make it easy. I had to get myself together." Ross earned 58 percent of the fan vote in the championship round, outdoing Evans' prop-filled display. Evans leaped over a painted portrait of himself and former Jazz giant Mark Eaton, who sat on a box and held up the ball for Evans to swipe on his way to the rim.

Kenneth Faried, James White, 2007 dunk champion Gerald Green and Eric Bledsoe also were in the field, while Kevin Durant, Kobe Bryant, Chris Paul and Dwyane Wade were among the All-Stars taking

in the show.

Green started it off by taking a lob from Indiana teammate Lance Stephenson off the side of the backboard and soaring in for a reverse slam. White played off his "Flight White" nickname when he split two columns of cheerleaders dressed as flight attendants for a powerful two-handed dunk.

Hall of Famers Bill Russell and Julius Erving, singer Alicia Keys, rapper Drake, director Spike Lee and comedian Chris Tucker were among those sitting court-side. Keys is performing at halftime of Sunday's All-Star game.

Earlier, Cleveland guard Kyrie Irving beat San Antonio's Matt Bonner to win the 3-point contest. Irving, who will play in his first All-Star game on Sunday, hit his first seven attempts and 20 of 25 overall in the final round to finish with 23 points, two shy of the record held by Craig Hodges and Jason Kapon.

Irving also played in the Rising Stars Challenge on Friday night, scoring 32 points. He came into the weekend with the goal of making a big splash.

"Yeah, this weekend was just basically about earning everybody's respect, and getting a chance for people to see me that don't usually see me," Irving said. "We're not nationally televised. This weekend is to show my face to the fans and get everybody acclimated to my face in the league."

Portland rookie Damian Lillard beat Philadelphia's Jrue Holiday to win the Skills Competition. Players navigated through a dribbling circuit, had to make a jumper from the top of the key and hit passing targets. Lillard finished the course in 29.8 seconds. Holiday's time was 35.6 seconds.

"I think the biggest thing for me was to try not to be too cool and speed through it," Lillard said, "but take my time with the passes and shots." □

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Danica Patrick wins pole for NASCAR's Daytona 500



Danica Patrick removes her helmet after her qualifying run for the NASCAR Daytona 500 Sprint Cup Series auto race at Daytona International Speedway, Sunday, Feb. 17, 2013, in Daytona Beach, Fla. Patrick won the pole, becoming the first woman to secure the top spot for any Sprint Cup race.

Associated Press

MARK LONG

AP Sports Writer

DAYTONA BEACH, Florida

(AP) — Danica Patrick won the Daytona 500 pole on Sunday, becoming the first woman to secure the top spot for any Sprint Cup race.

It was the biggest achievement of her four-year NASCAR career.

Patrick went out eighth in the qualifying session and covered the 2½-mile superspeedway in 45.817 seconds, averaging 196.434 mph.

"Hopefully, there are good things to come," Patrick said.

She waited about two hours as 37 fellow drivers tried to take her spot. Only four-time Cup champion Jeff Gordon even came close to knocking her off. Gordon was the only other driver who topped 196 mph. He locked up the other guaranteed spot in next week's season-opening Daytona 500.

"It's great to be part of

history," Gordon said. "I can say I was the fastest guy today."

The rest of the field will be set in duel qualifying races Thursday.

However the lineup unfolds, all drivers will line up behind Patrick's No. 10 Chevrolet SS for "The Great American Race."

"We say it's not really us, but she's got to do her part, too," team owner and fellow driver Tony Stewart said. "She did a really good job. I'm proud of all of us." Patrick has been the talk of Speedweeks. Not only did she open up about her budding romance with fellow Sprint Cup rookie Ricky Stenhouse Jr., but she was considered the front-runner for the pole after turning the fastest laps in practice Saturday.

And she didn't disappoint. She kept her car at or near the bottom of the famed track and gained ground on the straightaways, showing lots of power from a Hendrick Motorsports

engine.

The result surely felt good, especially considering the former IndyCar driver has mostly struggled in three NASCAR seasons. Her best finish in 10 Cup races is 17th, and she has one top-five in 58 starts in the second-tier Nationwide Series.

She raced part-time in 2010 and 2011 while still driving a full IndyCar slate. She switched solely to stock cars last season

and finished 10th in the Nationwide standings.

She made the jump to Sprint Cup this season and will battle Stenhouse for Rookie of the Year honors. But taking the pole will make her the talk of the town for another week. She also won the pole at Daytona for last year's Nationwide race.

This is considerably bigger. The previous highest female qualifier in a Cup

race was Janet Guthrie. She started ninth at Bristol and Talladega in 1977.

"That's a really big deal because qualifying for the Daytona 500 is really interesting thing," Patrick said. "If you're anywhere but the front row, it's really hard to see on race day. This just speaks volumes of Stewart-Haas Racing. It just shows what a great organization it is." □

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Led by Ligety, U.S. gets most golds at ski worlds

ANDREW DAMPF

AP Sports Writer

SCHLADMING, Austria (AP)

— Julia Mancuso got the ball rolling with an almost forgotten bronze medal on the same day Lindsey Vonn had a season-ending crash.

Ted Ligety followed with three golds to earn the title from local media of "Der Koenig von Schladming" — "The King of Schladming."

And 17-year-old Mikaela Shiffrin capped a historic world championships for the U.S. Ski Team by fighting off a serious case of nerves to win the slalom title.

In the end, even without Vonn and Bode Miller — who is sitting out this season to recover from left knee surgery — the U.S. had the most golds at worlds — the first non-European nation to achieve the feat.

"It's been incredible — hot and cold," U.S. Alpine director Patrick Riml said Sunday. "The rest of our team is stepping up so big."

The showing was even more impressive considering the scene, with huge crowds in this ski-crazy nation averaging 30,000 fans, and nearly all of them pulling for Austrian skiers.

While the Austrians led in total medals with eight, the U.S. topped the International Ski Federation's table with four golds. Austria and France were next with two golds each.

"It's nice being in Austria and beating up on the Austrians on their home turf," said Ligety, who won in super-G, super-combined and giant slalom. "They always dominate the sport and they always kind of seem like they should be dominating the sport so it makes it all the more satisfying to beat them."

But Peter Schroecksnadel, the powerful president of the Austrian ski federation, didn't see it as a loss.

"In the U.S., they don't count golds, they count the overall number of medals," Schroecksnadel said. "So there we are No. 1."

Riml, who is Austrian, wasn't surprised by Schroecksnadel's comments.



United States' Mikaela Shiffrin clears a gate during the second run of the women's slalom, at the Alpine skiing world championships in Schladming, Austria, Saturday, Feb. 16, 2013.

Associated Press



In this photo provided by Schladming 2013 Friday, Feb. 15, 2013, Ted Ligety, of the United States, poses with his 3 gold medals after winning the men's Giant Slalom, Super Combined and Super-G at the Alpine Skiing World Championships, in Schladming, Austria.

Associated Press

"He just turns it the way he wants it," Riml said. "That's OK. We won the most World Cup races this year and we'll lead that when we leave the World Cup finals and we got the most gold medals at the world championships. That's pretty good."

Indeed, the U.S. has 14 wins between men and women on this season's World Cup circuit to Austria's nine. Also, at the 2010 Vancouver Olympics, Germany led with three golds to the Americans' two but the U.S. had the most overall medals with eight.

"(We're) best in the world for sure," Riml said. "We saw it three years ago. We

saw it this year on the World Cup."

If Vonn and Miller come back fully healthy next season, there's no telling how strong the U.S. might be at the 2014 Sochi Olympics.

"Potentially we have a very, very good team," Ligety said. "If Bode gets fully healthy and motivated he has a really good chance of winning medals in the speed disciplines, and then Lindsey can win whatever she wants, basically, if she's healthy and feeling good again. And I'm sure Mikaela will be close to being a contender in the giant slalom as well, so we have a lot of good medal chances."



United States' Julia Mancuso shows the bronze medal she won in a women's super-G, at the Alpine skiing world championships in Schladming, Austria, Tuesday, Feb. 5, 2013.

Indeed, Shiffrin finished sixth in the giant slalom here for her top career result in that discipline, and she has plenty of room for improvement, according to her coaches.

Besides Vonn, three other U.S. women finished on the podium this season in downhill — Stacey Cook, Leanne Smith and Alice McKennis — to go along with Marco Sullivan and Steven Nyman on the men's side.

"Our goal is not to have just one (contender) per event," Riml said. "We got to have two and three." Entering the 2006 Turin

Olympics, the American spotlight was largely on Miller, while in Vancouver it was almost entirely on Vonn. This time, maybe it will be on the entire team.

"There is so much pressure on those athletes already, and if you strengthen our team that takes away a lot of pressure from everybody," Riml said.

One key to strengthening the team has been the opening of two key facilities in recent years: the Center of Excellence at the team's home base in Park City, Utah, an ultra-modern physical training and education facility; and a speed training center for downhill and super-G at Copper Mountain, Colorado.

The Center of Excellence was designed to replicate the style and feel of a college campus and includes strength-training areas, ski ramps, a nutrition center, rehabilitation facilities and a sport science lab.

Sounds like a great place for Vonn to use as she recovers from surgery to repair two torn tendons in her right knee.

Besides allowing its own athletes optimal training before the North American speed races at the start of each World Cup season, the Copper facility has enabled the U.S. to arrange key deals with other federations by allowing teams such as Austria, Italy and Russia to use it, too.

In exchange, the Austrians allowed the Americans to train on the worlds' courses in Schladming on several different occasions earlier this season; the Italians opened up several of their training sites — perfect when the weather is bad in Austria and Switzerland but sunny on the southern side of the Alps; and perhaps most valuable of all, the Russians have given the U.S. free access to the Olympic slopes in Sochi — something no other team besides Russia has.

"With that venue we're in the driver's seat and we can choose and pick who we want to work with," Riml said. "Obviously we want something in return."



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Peers see LeBron for own greatness

JEFF LATZKE

AP Sports Writer

OKLAHOMA CITY (AP) — LeBron James changed his jersey number, won an NBA championship and still is inevitably compared to Michael Jordan at nearly every opportunity.

With James producing at a record-setting clip that no one had ever reached, just as Jordan's 50th birthday approaches this weekend, classifying James' place in NBA history couldn't be a hotter topic.

James wants no part of it, posting on Twitter that he's "not MJ." And his peers say it's time to back off all the comparisons.

"It's simple. There will never be another Michael Jordan," said Miami Heat teammate Dwyane Wade, who grew up in Chicago watching Jordan's games. "But you know what? That guy down there (James), he's in the beginning of starting his own path. There will be someone who will be compared to the next LeBron James, but there will never be another one of him. Certain guys are that special and that unique."



Miami Heat forward LeBron James (6) and Oklahoma City Thunder forward Kevin Durant (35) watch a foul shot during the third quarter of an NBA basketball game in Oklahoma City, Thursday, Feb. 14, 2013. Miami won 110-100.

Associated Press

James' NBA record six-game streak of at least 30 points while shooting 60 percent or better ended on Thursday against Oklahoma City when he scored 39 points and shot 58 per-

cent in the Heat's 110-100 win.

Doing something that even Jordan never did on his way to six NBA titles made James the buzz of the league heading into

All-Star weekend. But it wasn't the most important thing to James.

"It didn't bother me during the game or not, if I was shooting 60 percent or not," James said. "I just go out and play my game, and that was the result of it. It didn't bother me and it didn't matter if I got it tonight or not. ... To win is what it's all about."

And just because LeBron is adding to his own lore doesn't mean it has to come at the expense of Jordan's greatness.

"I think those two guys are different," three-time scoring champion Kevin Durant said. "LeBron's a once-in-a-lifetime type of player. I think people really were waiting for him to win the championship to compare, just like any other great player. ... It's not a knock on LeBron or taking anything from him, because the stuff he's done is unreal as well, but it's kind of hard to compare anybody to Michael Jordan."

James started his NBA career wearing Jordan's No. 23, but switched to 6 later and suggested that no one

in the league should wear 23 again out of tribute to Jordan. The plan never stuck.

And while establishing his own identity, James still finds himself dodging Jordan's impressive shadow.

"You can't compare guys until both guys are finished playing," Durant said. "You'll see when Kobe Bryant's done playing how you can compare him to Michael, Magic Johnson and LeBron, stuff like that. But while they're playing, I don't think you can really compare them."

This stretch of proficiency is just another phase in James' ascent. Where he'll end up, whether he'll ever approach all those titles James, Wade and Chris Bosh predicted when they joined in Miami, is still to be determined.

"Every year, he's come back a better player for 10 years now. That's remarkable in itself. Not a lot of guys can say that. I'm not so sure he's at his peak, which is frightening," said Oklahoma City coach Scott Brooks, a Jordan contemporary. □

Del Potro beats Benneteau for ABN AMRO title

ROTTERDAM, Netherlands (AP) — Juan Martin Del Potro beat Julien Benneteau 7-6 (2), 6-3 Sunday to win the ABN AMRO World Tennis Tournament, going one better than his runner-up spot last year to win his 14th ATP title. Benneteau managed what no other player at the tournament achieved — breaking Del Potro's service twice in the first set — but always struggled to hold his own service against the big-hitting Argentine and crumbled in the second set. The 2009

U.S. Open winner had not dropped a service game heading into the final. He lost last year's final to Roger Federer.

Benneteau, who ended the No. 2-ranked Federer's quest to defend his title in the quarterfinals, is now 0-8 in ATP finals.

"We are getting closer and closer. I am sure with you I can win a title," Benneteau said as he thanked his coach, Loic Courteau.

Benneteau saved four match points when serving at 5-2 in the second set, but

it was only a stay of execution as Del Potro served out the match to love.

While Benneteau managed to break the 1.98-meter (6-foot-6) 2nd-seeded Argentine, Del Potro hit back immediately, breaking Benneteau as he reeled off four straight games to take command of the opening set.

Benneteau saved two set points on his own serve at 5-3 and then broke Del Potro a second time on his way to forcing the set to a tiebreak. □



Argentina's Juan Martin del Potro holds the trophy after winning in two sets, 7-6, 6-3, against Julien Benneteau of France, rear right, in the final of the ABN AMRO world tennis tournament at Ahoy Arena in Rotterdam, Netherlands, Sunday Feb. 17, 2013. Associated Press



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Azarenka beats Williams to win Qatar Open

MICHAEL CASEY

AP Sports Writer

DOHA, Qatar (AP) — Defending champion Victoria Azarenka beat Serena Williams 7-6 (6), 2-6, 6-3 to win the Qatar Open on Sunday, earning her 16th title and ending a 10-match losing streak against the American.

Azarenka will give up the No. 1 ranking to the second-ranked Williams on Monday but extended her current winning streak to 14 matches, which included her second Australian Open title. More importantly, she may have turned around what has been a one-sided rivalry against Williams. Azarenka had not beaten Williams since 2009 in Miami, and had a 1-11 record against the American going into Sunday's final.

"It feels incredible," Azarenka said. "You know, this tournament is really great. ... It had such a strong field going into it, and I'm really



Belarus' Victoria Azarenka displays the trophy, after her victory against Serena Williams of the US, in the final match of the Qatar WTA Ladies Open tennis tournament, in Doha, Qatar, Sunday, Feb. 17, 2013.

Associated Press

glad that in the end of the week I'm the one who's holding the trophy."

Azarenka broke to go up 2-1 when an erratic Williams hit one of her four double-faults in the first set, but the American ensured it was back on serve after eight games. Williams struggled with her first serve

throughout the first set and hit 26 unforced errors, but still had a set point at 6-5 in the tiebreaker. However, she hit a poor forehand into the net, and Azarenka then converted her first set point with a great return.

Williams dominated the second set with her powerful serve and forehand,

while Azarenka could only hit 39 percent of her first serves.

Azarenka fell behind 0-30 in the first game of the decider but recovered and took a 3-0 lead. Williams then saved a match point at 5-2 to stay the match, but Azarenka clinched the win on her next service game when Williams hit a forehand wide.

"I just wanted to fight and give it my best, give myself every opportunity I can," Azarenka said. "I started with love-30 (in the third) and I was like, 'You have to keep it together. You have to do something.' Serena was on a roll ... so I had to really step up my game. I'm really glad I could turn it around and stay tough." Williams praised Azarenka's performance but insisted she still wasn't at her best. Struggling at times with a cold and still nursing a right ankle injury that bothered her at the Australian Open, Williams appeared slug-

gish in early-round matches and needed three sets to beat Petra Kvitova in the quarterfinals.

She made 48 errors against Azarenka and only converted three of her seven break points.

"This whole week, I just don't think I played my best tennis, and I was fighting every match," she said. "I can't play that quality game against a top player like Victoria. I have to be able to pick up my game, and I wasn't able to do that today."

I stayed at a two out of a 10, and I can't play that low."

Williams had won her last eight finals. Still, she took comfort in the fact that she is returning to the No. 1 ranking for the first time in almost two and a half years. She becomes the oldest player to hold that title, breaking the mark previously held by Chris Evert, who was No. 1 in 1985 just shy of her 31st birthday. □



Spain's Rafael Nadal bites the Brazil Open ATP tennis tournament trophy as he poses for pictures after defeating Argentina's David Nalbandian in the final match in Sao Paulo, Brazil, Sunday, Feb. 17, 2013. Nadal won 6-2, 6-3.

Associated Press

Nadal

Continued from page 17

It was Nadal's 51st singles title, and first since winning the French Open for the seventh time last June.

Nadal struggled to find a rhythm in the beginning but was still able to break Nalbandian's serve twice to take the first set, then rallied from 3-0 down in the second to win six straight games and close out and match in 1 hour, 18 minutes.

Seeking his 12th title, the 93rd-ranked Nalbandian was playing in a final for the first time since he was disqualified for kicking an advertisement board and injuring a line judge at

Queen's Club last June. The former world No. 3 hasn't won a title since 2010 in Washington.

Nadal said his knee felt better on Sunday and it made all the difference.

"When the knee is feeling better like today I feel like that I can do more of the things that I used to do my entire life," he said. "If the pain is bearable like it was today, then it's fine."

He had complained of soreness in his knee after Friday's semifinal, which marked his second three-set match at the tournament.

Nadal still looked far from his best on Sunday, though, and didn't seem to be moving well. The knee visibly bothered him at times and he left many balls un-

challenged throughout the match.

But with the support from the local fans and with former Brazil star striker Ronaldo and mixed martial arts champion Anderson Silva in the crowd, Nadal took control of the match in the second set to secure the victory.

Nadal converted five of his eight break points against Nalbandian and was broken twice by the Argentine. Nadal took the lead for the first time with a break in the sixth game, then broke Nalbandian again in the final game to close out the set. The Argentine came out strong in the second set and broke Nadal twice in a row to go up 3-0, but the Spaniard quickly rebounded with two breaks and

then cruised to close out the match without losing another game in front of nearly 10,000 people packing the Ibirapuera arena.

"I didn't play my best match today, Rafa was much better," Nalbandian said. "I was ahead in the second set but I couldn't take advantage of it."

The 26-year-old Nadal, currently ranked fifth, returned to action at the VTR Open in Chile last week, losing the singles and doubles finals.

The final in Brazil was only his eighth singles match since his return. He withdrew from the doubles in Sao Paulo after winning the first match with Nalbandian as his partner. Nadal said he wanted to rest his knee for the singles tournament. □



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Budget earphones borrow from midrange line

ROY FURCHGOTT
© 2013 New York Times

RHA HAS PRODUCED BUDGET-PRICED MA150'S. RHA has, in a sense, down-scaled. The headphone company has adapted key components from its midprice earphones to produce the budget-price MA150.

One reason the sound remains good may be that the 150's ear tips fit a little loosely in the ear. With a really good seal, the bass may be a little overpowering and the overall sound a little fuzzy and indistinct. Using slightly looser tips improves the overall impression. But at \$20, that is more a

that is used in some higher-quality amplifiers and car amps as well. It pumps up to 50 watts to the low-frequency speaker and 20 watts to the high. Neither of these is quite the breakthrough it is made to appear, but you do not often find either in a speaker built for computers. The end result is a very

Mini, Logitech has created a diminutive keyboard with full-size features. Liltily called the Logitech Ultrathin Keyboard Mini, the keyboard is itself about the same size and thickness as an iPad Mini. It attaches with a magnetic hinge – just like iPad covers – and has a built-in lip where the tablet stands horizontally or vertically while in use. The keyboard connects to the Mini through Bluetooth. Logitech claims a keyboard battery life of 180 hours. The keys are nearly full size and move during typing, unlike keys on some accessory keyboards. The one real problem with the keyboard is its size. It's as if you are toting not one, but two Minis. A quibble is that, although the keyboard does set off the magnetic lock on the iPad, the magnet is not strong enough to keep the board stuck to the pad. It tends to flop open. The Logitech Ultrathin Keyboard Mini is due out this month at a price of \$80.

THIS PATCH KNOWS IF YOU'VE BEEN BAD OR GOOD TO YOUR BODY. The personal technology industry has concocted many devices to measure a user's daily physical activity, from tiny clips that hang on a pocket to wristbands that convert a phone into a private coach. BodyMedia is taking a dif-

RHA's MA150 earphones. RHA has adapted key components from its midrange earphones to produce the budget-price MA150. (Handout via The New York

ferent approach with the Vue Patch, a disposable monitor embedded in an adhesive patch resembling a large Band-Aid. Once glued on, the Vue will collect data on activity levels, sleep patterns and calories burned, day and night, for a week. The sensor comes in a thin, palm-size strip made to be worn on the arm. The Vue, which is due in the second half of 2013, will share its information by USB. Once a week of recording is over, you remove the patch, open it and take out the sensor. There is already an update planned that will use Bluetooth to share information while the patch is still on. The final price has not been determined, but the company said it should be less than \$100.



KEF's X330A desktop speakers. The speakers are nearly a foot high, with a roughly 7-by-10-inch footprint and priced at \$800 a pair. (Handout via The New York Times)

The MA150, at \$20, uses 10-millimeter drivers similar to those in the popular MA350 model, which are \$40, and the \$50 MA450. RHA, of Glasgow, Scotland, trims cost where it is largely unnoticeable. The earphones' cable is rubber instead of cloth, and it is a bit shorter. The earpieces are plastic rather than aluminum. The ear tips are single-density silicone rather than double-density. The warranty is one rather than three years. Some differences you might notice, like the loss of the three-button controller on the cord and the lack of a carrying case.

quibble than a complaint. BIG SPEAKERS BRING A BIG SOUND TO COMPUTERS. The British loudspeaker maker KEF, a name well known to audiophiles, has broken out both the high-tech and marketing dazzle for its desktop X300A speakers. For starters, it talks about the "Uni-Q driver array," which joins two speakers in one – a fancy version of a good old coaxial speaker, which puts a woofer for low tones and a tweeter for high tones in the same chassis. Then it notes that each speaker has a class AB amplifier, a kind of dual circuit

solid set of speakers – 16.5 pounds of solid each. They are not for people concerned about desk space. The size of typical bookshelf speakers, they are nearly a foot high, with a roughly 7-by-10-inch footprint. They also are not cheap, at \$800 a pair. A FULL-FEATURED KEYBOARD PAIRS WITH THE IPAD MINI. While the small size of the iPad Mini is its charm, it is also a liability. The challenge of typing on a glass keyboard increases as its size shrinks. But accessory makers have come to the rescue. For the



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China plays by its own rules while going global

JACK CHANG

Associated Press

MEXICO CITY (AP) — When Venezuela seized billions of dollars in assets from Exxon Mobil and other foreign companies, Chinese state banks and investors didn't blink. Over the past five years they have loaned Venezuela more than \$35 billion.

Elsewhere around the Caribbean, as hotels were struggling to stay afloat in the global economic slowdown, the Chinese response was to Bankroll the biggest resort under construction in the Western Hemisphere — a massive hotel, condominium and casino complex in the Bahamas just a few miles from half-empty resorts.

All over the world, from Latin America to the South Pacific, a cash-flush China is funding projects that others won't, seemingly less concerned by the conventional wisdom of credit ratings and institutions such as the World Bank.

The Chinese money is breathing life into government infrastructure projects that otherwise might have died for lack of financing. For commercial projects such as the Caribbean resort, China is filling a gap left by Western investors

retrenching after the 2008 financial crisis.

But some in the Bahamas worry what will happen if the sprawling Baha Mar project fails. They picture an economy saturated with hotels, dragged down by an expensive Chinese white elephant. Likewise,



Construction of the Baha Mar resort on the beach on New Providence island, Bahamas. Baha Mar has opened sales offices all over Asia to promote and presell hundreds of pricey condos, hoping to imprint new travel habits on a continent that's traditionally spent beach vacations in Southeast Asia. It is also working with the Bahamian government to open more consular offices in China to issue visas.

(AP Photo/Jaong Ku Hwang)

the infrastructure loans are loading financially shaky countries with more debt and letting them avoid economic reforms that other lenders would likely have demanded.

"The Chinese play by other

rules," said Kevin Gallagher, a Boston University international relations professor who has studied Chinese lending to Latin America. "We'll give you financing with no conditions, and we'll finance things the International Monetary Fund won't fund, things others

loans not only to Venezuela but also to Ecuador and Argentina, according to the Gallagher report. All three are junk bond countries, ratings agencies say. In contrast, the World Bank and Inter-American Development Bank remain larger lenders in Brazil and Mexico, both countries with higher bond ratings.

In cases such as the tiny South Pacific islands of Tonga, China is lending enormous sums to countries few expect will be able to repay.

What has surely given the Chinese banks courage is the trillions of dollars in reserves the country holds in U.S.

Treasury bonds, investments that pay almost nothing in interest. Making that money work harder for a return overseas has become nothing less than a national priority, part of China's trumpeted "going out" strategy.

On the beaches of New Providence in the Bahamas, hundreds of Chinese construction workers are toiling around the clock to ready the Baha Mar project for a phased opening scheduled to start in late 2014.

The project will add thousands of hotel rooms not far

from the islands' biggest resort, the Atlantis.

"Going forward, we have to achieve a sustainable tourism product," said James Smith, the former state minister of finance for the Bahamas. "If we don't, Baha Mar could be cannibalizing Atlantis."

Baha Mar has opened sales offices all over Asia to promote and presell hundreds of pricey condos, hoping to imprint new travel habits on a continent that's traditionally spent beach vacations in Southeast Asia. It is also working with the Bahamian government to open more consular offices in China to issue visas.

"In general, you would assume that a project of that size is generating its own demand and the idea would probably also be with Chinese money comes an influx of Chinese travelers," said Jan Freitag, senior vice president of hospitality industry research firm STR. "The Chinese would argue that we can maybe attract a clientele that has not been with you before."

When completed, the complex is set to boast brands such as the Grand Hyatt, Rosewood and Mondrian, and 313 \$1-million condos being marketed to the international elite.

China says ConocoPhillips can resume production

BEIJING (AP) — The Chinese subsidiary of ConocoPhillips can resume operations at an oil field off the coast of northeastern China that was closed in 2011 after two oil spills, a regulator said. Conoco and its subsidiary, ConocoPhillips China Inc.,

came under intense media criticism in China following the spills, which drained into the Bohai Sea and its bay.

The State Oceanic Administration said in a statement Saturday that conditions at the Penglai 19-3 oilfield had

returned to normal after a series of rectification measures, and that ConocoPhillips could gradually resume production there.

China's largest oil field is jointly owned by Houston-based ConocoPhillips' Chinese subsidiary and China

National Offshore Oil Corp., China's main offshore oil and gas producer.

The two spills occurred in June 2011. Combined, they released more than 30,300 gallons of oil, or 723 barrels, and more than 110,000 gallons of mineral oil-based

drilling mud, which is used as a lubricant for drilling.

The company said the first spill resulted from a natural fault in the oil reservoir. The second spill was due to a high-pressure zone that was encountered while drilling a well.

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Lucky investors gain big as M&A surges in New Year

Bernard Condon
Associated Press

NEW YORK (AP) -- If stock investing is like playing the lottery, your odds of winning the jackpot just got a little better.

Companies are buying each other at the fastest pace since before the Great Recession. Investors lucky enough to own stock in a company being bought are pocketing big money.

Since November, U.S. companies have announced a dozen purchases worth \$3 billion or more in mining, food, technology, airlines and other industries. Stocks of the acquired companies have soared 20 percent or more above where they were trading before the deals were announced.

On Thursday, billionaire Warren Buffett added to the frenzy. His company, Berkshire Hathaway, joined another investment firm to buy all the stock of H.J. Heinz Co. for \$23 billion, or \$72.50 per share. That was 20 percent higher than the ketchup maker's



American Airlines passengers check in at Terminal C at Dallas-Fort Worth International Airport, in Texas. The merger of US Airways and American Airlines airlines has given birth to a mega airline with more passengers than any other in the world.
(AP Photo/Tom Fox)

share price the day before. A week earlier, another group of shareholders scored. In an echo of the big leveraged buyouts of the boom years, Michael Dell and an investment firm offered to take his publicly traded computer company private for \$24 billion, most of that borrowed money. That translates to \$13.65 per share, a 25 percent gain for stock owners, but they may get

even more. Two big Dell investors are protesting that the offer is too low, raising the possibility of something rarely seen in M&A these days — a bidding war. Investors are watching this deal closely for another reason: They hope it inspires investment firms to attempt other big leveraged buyouts — risky takeovers that use lots of borrowed money from banks and bond markets. The

Dell deal would be the first large leveraged buyout since before the recession. "We're finally dusting off the cobwebs," says R.J. Hottovy, a director at Morningstar, a research firm. "It shows that banks are willing to take risks."

Most deals have been companies buying each other in the same or similar businesses, with investment firms, and their heaps of borrowed money, playing no role. The companies often tap banks for money but usually use more of their own cash and are considered safer.

Still, CEOs have hesitated to strike deals because they were unsure they could count on the economy to help lift profits and absorb the costs of combining two companies. Now, that fear apparently is ebbing.

"It's a sign that Corporate America believes that the expansion is going to accelerate," says Peter Cardillo, chief market economist at Rockwell Global Capital. The deals follow other signs that confidence is returning. So far this year, initial

public offerings of stocks have raised the most cash in two decades; small investors are putting money into U.S. stock mutual funds at the fastest pace in five years; and professional investors are borrowing more to finance their trades because they are not as fearful of losing money.

The last time so many companies paired off, in 2006 and 2007, stocks were surging and investors were pocketing big gains on takeover news.

Conditions seem ripe for plenty more deals.

Borrowing money to buy has rarely been cheaper since interest rates are near record lows. And many companies can pay for M&A out of their own pocket. Companies in the Standard and Poor's 500 index have more than \$1 trillion in cash on their books, up 66 percent in five years.

If the means are plenty, so are the motives.

Before the Great Recession, buyout firms raised hundreds of billions of dollars from investors. □

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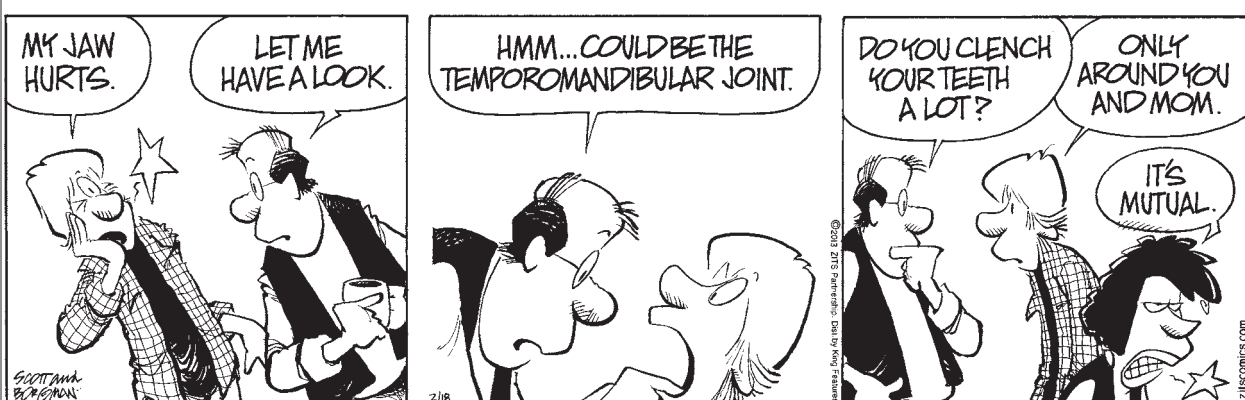
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Conceptis Sudoku

			5		3	4	9	6
		7			9		1	8
	6							7
6				9			5	2
			3		7			
7	2			6				3
2							4	
5	1		4			8		
9	4	3	7		1			

Difficulty Level ★

2/18

Sudoku is a number-placing puzzle based on a 9x9 grid with several given numbers. The object is to place the numbers 1 to 9 in the empty squares so that each row, each column and each 3x3 box contains the same number only once. The difficulty level of the Conceptis Sudoku increases from Monday to Sunday.

Saturday's puzzle answer

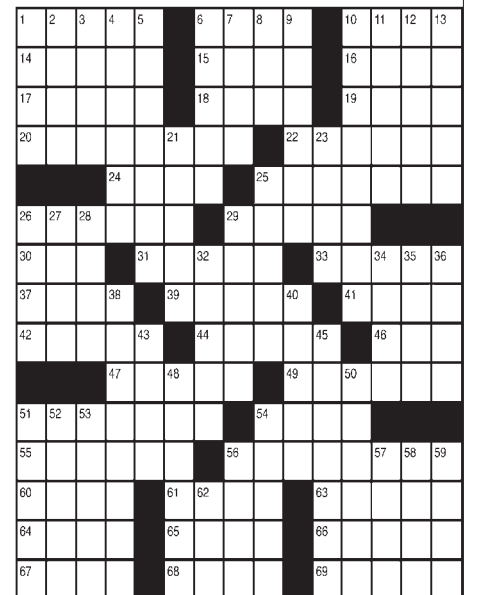
7	6	9	2	5	8	4	1	3
3	5	1	4	9	6	7	2	8
2	4	8	7	3	1	9	5	6
6	9	2	3	7	5	1	8	4
4	8	5	1	2	9	6	3	7
1	3	7	6	8	4	5	9	2
5	2	6	9	4	3	8	7	1
9	1	3	8	6	7	2	4	5
8	7	4	5	1	2	3	6	9

ACROSS

- Ship spars
- "... the night before Christmas..."
- Actor Sandler
- Sir... Newton
- Per person
- Hit the ceiling
- Brazilian dance
- ... code; phone number's start
- Large kitchen appliance
- Contestants in a school bee
- Jog someone's memory
- Perpendicular building wings
- Meals
- Handgun
- Drop in on
- Debtor's note
- Mexican dollars
- Stogie, for one
- Vase-shaped jug
- Whiplash sites
- Birthday party dessert
- Goes out with
- Persists
- Pot cover
- "Terrific!"
- Atlantic and Pacific
- Seems
- Person, place or thing
- "Jane Eyre" writer Charlotte
- Rich
- Search
- Use the molars
- Summoned with a beeper
- A single time
- Hair dye
- Worn out
- Rex or Donna
- ... up; arranges
- Snow vehicles

DOWN

- Señorita, in the USA



Created by Jacqueline E. Mathews

2/18/13

Saturday's Puzzle Solved

MEAT	SANDS	HOB
AXLE	TRAIL	UPON
SIDE	AMBLE	MEAL
STATELY	APLENTY	
ELK	UTTER	
DWARF	ESE	GUARD
RATS	BAH	EASIER
ADO	CURE	ALL
FENCES	RIM	LESS
TREAD	TEL	BIDES
PAGED	PUB	
ASPIRIN	CAMELOT	
GOUT	VAPOR	RODE
EMMA	ENACT	ADDS
DEAL	STRAY	LEST

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2/18/13

- Felt insulted about
- Seat at a bar
- Hit flies
- Carves
- Builds
- Involve
- Hate
- Dried plum
- Explorer... de León
- Gingrich's namesakes
- ... away; left
- Monster
- Owner's paper
- Chances
- Go quickly

Colbert Busch: Stephen won't overshadow run for Congress

BRUCE SMITH
Associated Press

CHARLESTON, South Carolina (AP) — Elizabeth Colbert Busch remembers watching the funeral of Robert Kennedy on television, with her younger brother Stephen — now the star of Comedy Central's "The Colbert Report" — sitting in her lap. She said to herself, "Someday, if they let women run for office, I'm going to."

Now, she's making that dream a reality with a run for Congress. And she isn't worried her brother's fame will overshadow her campaign.

"I'm not. I'm so proud of what he is and what he has accomplished," she said in an interview in her campaign office on a busy Charleston street. "But when people see what I have done and they know the work we have done and they know me as a person and a professional, it will be fine."

Colbert said he plans to support his sister, whom the family calls Lulu. But that won't include mentions on his show — unless, of course, she does something funny.

"Lulu has a job to do, and that's run for Congress. I have a job to do and that's to make jokes," he said. "I would never use my show to get my sister elected. But the fact my sister is running, or that Mark Sanford is running or Teddy Turner is running or Chip Limehouse, who I knew when I was younger, is running - those are all opportunities for my character to make jokes." Sanford, the former South Carolina governor, trying to make a comeback after an affair with an Argentine

woman derailed his political career; Turner the son of media magnate Ted Turner; and Limehouse, a state representative, are among 16 Republicans running for South Carolina's 1st District seat.

Colbert Busch is one of two Democrats seeking the seat held by Republican Tim Scott until he was appointed to fill the state's U.S. Senate seat, left vacant by the resignation of Jim DeMint. Her Democratic opponent in the March 19 primary is perennial candidate Ben Frasier.

"This is a privilege to be able to do this," Colbert Busch said. "My gut says you're never going to get this opportunity again. And you don't want to turn around as an old woman and say I didn't try."

She faces an uphill battle in the Republican-leaning district which Scott won with 62 percent of the vote in the November election. She said her desire for public service was forged in her youth and tempered by her life experiences of loss, struggle and professional success.

On Sept. 11, 1974, Colbert Busch's father and two of her other brothers — her parents had 11 children — died in a plane crash. She would be in New York on another Sept. 11 in a nearby building that shook when the hijacked planes crashed into the World Trade Center.

Colbert Busch, who once worked in Washington as an intern for then-U.S. Senator Ernest "Fritz" Hollings, a South Carolina Democrat, saw her first marriage end in divorce, leaving her as a single mom making \$14,000 a year, she said. □

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Fire Dept. II	582-1108
Police Tipline	11141
Hospital	527-4000

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Police	582-4000

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Fewer bees in U.S. a threat to world's almond supply

GOSIA WOZNIACKA

Associated Press

TURLOCK, California (AP)

— In an almond orchard in California's Central Valley, bee inspector Neil Trent pried open a buzzing hive and pulled out a frame to see if it was at least two-thirds covered with bees.

Trent has hopped from orchard to orchard this month, making sure enough bees were in each hive provided by beekeepers. Not enough bees covering a frame indicates an unhealthy hive — and fewer working bees to pollinate the almond bloom, which starts next week across hundreds of thousands of acres (hectares) stretching from Red Bluff to Bakersfield.

"The bloom will come and go quickly," said Trent, who works for the Bakersfield-based bee broker Scientific Ag Co. "The question is: Will the almond seeds get set? It depends if you have enough of a workforce of bees."

That has growers concerned as nomadic beekeepers from across the country converge on the state with their semi-trucks, delivering billions of bees to the orchards for the annual pollination. Most almond trees depend on bees to transfer pollen from the flower of one tree variety to the flower of another variety before fertilization, which leads to the development of seeds. It's a daunting task: California's orchards provide about 80 percent of the global almond supply. And with almond acreage increasing steadily in recent years, the bees must now pollinate 760,000 acres (307,500 hectares) of trees. The number of bees needed is expected to increase as



Bee inspector Neil Trent of Scientific Ag Co., inspects a frame of bees to assess the colony strength Tuesday, Feb. 12, 2013, near Turlock, Calif. Not enough bees covering a frame means an unhealthy hive, and fewer working bees to pollinate California's almond bloom, which starts mid-February.

Associated Press

almond demand grows and orchards continue to expand.

Already, more than half of the country's honeybees are brought to California at the end of February for almond pollination, which requires about 1.5 million hives from out of state, and another 500,000 from elsewhere in the state. Honeybees are preferred for commercial-scale pollination, because they are social, build larger colonies than other bees, and their hives can easily be moved.

Bee brokers, beekeepers and almond growers

around the state say there's a shortage of healthy honeybees for this year's pollination, especially after colony collapse disorder took a higher toll this winter. The disorder, in which honey bees suddenly disappear or die, wipes out thousands of colonies each year.

The shortage has some growers scrambling for bees — even sub-performers — as trees are about to bloom, driving up bee prices again this year, to an all-time high of more than \$200 per colony.

"There's definitely a shortage of strong bee colonies," said Joe Traynor, owner of Scientific Ag, which connects growers with beekeepers. "There is a problem covering all the acres of almonds in the state."

Since it was recognized in 2006, colony collapse disorder has destroyed colonies at a rate of about 30 percent a year, according to the U.S.

Department of Agriculture. Before that, losses were about 15 percent a year from pests and diseases. No one has determined its cause, but most researchers point to a combination of factors, including pesticide contamination, poor nutrition and bee diseases. This year, experts say, the die-off has been as high as 40 to 50 percent for some beekeepers.

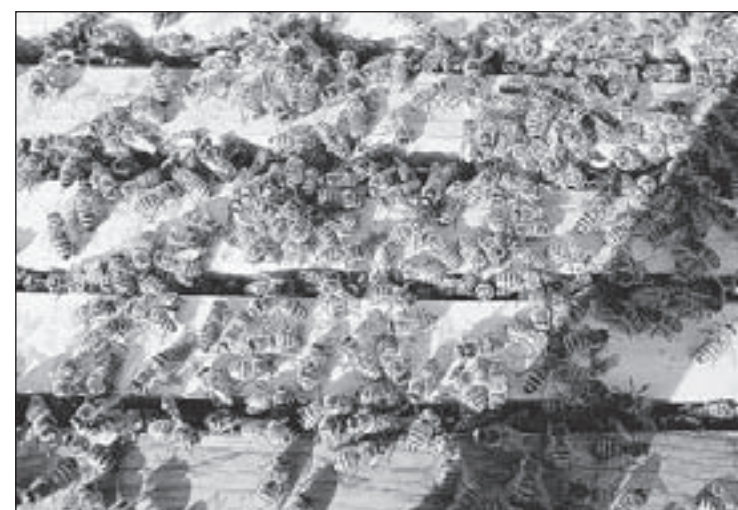
"We have smaller populations in the hives and higher winter losses," said Eric Mussen, a bee specialist at the entomology department of University of California, Davis. "Bees across the country are not in as good a shape as last year. When you stress them far enough,

Montana, lost 40 percent of his bees this winter due to the drought and mite problems.

"You have to buy bees elsewhere to pick up your losses, and not everything we have remaining after the loss is very strong," said Sundberg. "I had a tough time fulfilling my obligations to all the growers."

But at least he still has bees, Sundberg said. Some colleagues were not as lucky: they lost 75 percent or even 99 percent.

Traynor, the bee broker, said he's been fielding phone calls from desperate beekeepers and growers who are short several thousand colonies — but he has no more good bees to offer them. The shortage



Honeybees cluster on top of the frames of an opened hive in an almond orchard Tuesday, February 12, 2013, near Turlock, Calif. Bee brokers, beekeepers and almond growers around the state say there is a shortage of healthy bees for this year's almond pollination, which starts mid-February.

Associated Press

the bees just give in."

This year, Mussen said, many bees did not get enough nutrition because a Midwest drought reduced forage. Conversion of pasture land to corn production for ethanol also reduced the number of flowers producing nectar. To compensate for forage loss, beekeepers fed bees more high-fructose corn syrup and other supplements. But such substitutes don't provide all the nutrients pollen does, Mussen said. Malnourished bees are more susceptible to diseases.

Lance Sundberg, a beekeeper who hauled his hives for almond pollination from Columbus,

will only get worse in the future, he said, as almond acreage grows.

Having strong hives is critical, Traynor said, especially during rainy seasons, because bees have a short period of flight time when it's dry enough to pollinate. Fewer bees may not be able to reach all the blooms in time.

In recent years, the Almond Board of California, which represents more than 6,000 growers, has poured \$1.4 million into bee health research. The group also worked on alternatives to reduce growers' reliance on honeybees, said Bob Curtis, associate director of agricultural affairs. □

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Willis' new 'Die Hard' kills it with \$25M debut



This publicity film image released by 20th Century Fox shows Bruce Willis as John McClane, left, Jai Courtney as his son Jack, center and Sebastian Koch as Komarov in a scene from "A Good Day to Die Hard." (AP Photo/Frank Masi)

DAVID GERMAIN
AP Movie Writer

LOS ANGELES (AP) — Bruce Willis remains a die-hard at the box office.

Willis' action sequel "A Good Day to Die Hard" debuted as the weekend's top draw with a \$25 million debut from Friday to Sunday. The 20th Century Fox release raised its domestic total to \$33.2 million since opening Thursday for Valentine's Day to get a jump on the long President's Day weekend.

The movie comes 25 years after the original "Die Hard" and six years after "Live Free or Die Hard," the hit that resurrected the franchise centered on Willis' relentless New York City cop John McClane.

The previous weekend's No. 1 movie, Universal's comedy "Identity Thief" starring Jason Bateman and Melissa McCarthy, was a close second with \$23.4 million to lift its haul to \$70.7 million.

Debuting at No. 3 with \$21.4 million was Relativity Media's romance "Safe Haven," starring Julianne Hough and Josh Duhamel in an adaptation of the Nicholas Sparks novel about a woman who flees her abusive husband and takes up with a sensitive widower. Since opening on Valentine's Day, "Safe Haven" has taken in \$30.3 million.

The Weinstein Co. animated tale "Escape from Planet Earth" opened at No. 4 with \$16.1 million. With a

voice cast that includes Brendan Fraser, Jessica Alba, Sarah Jessica Parker and Rob Corddry, the movie follows the adventures of aliens captured by the U.S. military.

Making a weak debut at No. 6 was the Warner Bros. teen fantasy "Beautiful Creatures," which pulled in \$7.5 million for the weekend and \$10 million since opening Thursday. The movie is based on the first in the best-selling series about a Southern misfit (Alden Ehrenreich) who falls under the spell of a teen witch (Alice Englert).

"A Good Day to Die Hard" did solid business despite bad reviews for the latest installment, which sends Willis' McClane to Moscow in search of his estranged son, an undercover spy who winds up teaming with the old man against Russian bad guys.

The movie's success follows notable flops from two other holdovers of the 1980s action scene, Sylvester Stallone with "Bullet to the Head" and Arnold Schwarzenegger with "The Last Stand."

"There's still life left in the 'Die Hard' franchise. Given the fact that pretty much every other R-rated action movie that's come out this year has completely fallen flat, this is a pretty good showing," said Paul Dergarabedian, an analyst for box-office tracker Hollywood.com. Willis is "one of the old-guard action stars who still has a solid career

going, whereas a lot of these aging action heroes, unless they're in an ensemble cast, they're not able to draw audiences the way they used to."

Overall Hollywood business remained slow, with revenues off for the fourth-straight weekend com-

pared to the same period last year. Domestic business from Friday to Sunday totaled \$141 million, down 9.4 percent from the same weekend a year ago, when "Safe House" and "The Vow" led the way with about \$23 million each.

A bright spot this year has

been strong business for top Academy Awards contenders leading up to next Sunday's Oscars. The weekend's top-20 films included eight of the nine best-picture nominees, seven of which have either topped \$100 million domestically or are close.

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Rihanna, Issa light up London Fashion Week

GREGORY KATZ
Associated Press

LONDON (AP) — London Fashion Week moved into high international gear Saturday with a debut collection from Barbadian pop diva Rihanna, a Native American-inspired show by Brazilian-born Issa and a host of other eclectic offerings. No one went to Rihanna's Saturday night debut as a fashion designer expecting demure dresses set off with tasteful pearls. So no one was surprised by the double-volume hip-hop music, smoke machines and champagne that greeted guests at the unveiling of her Rihanna for River Island collection.

And few were taken aback by the bad girl, rock chick styling of some of her clothes, with tight-fitting jersey outfits and dresses cut to show more than a bit of leg.

It was a fun, flattering collection aimed at young women, containing nothing shocking or outrageous from a singer who has been known to bring those elements to her live performances.

She provided some pop star glamour to an already glittering London Fashion Week, which will soon showcase the work of Vivienne Westwood, Burberry's Christopher Bailey, and Tom Ford.



A model wears a design created by designer Issa during London Fashion Week, at Somerset House in central London. (Photo by Joel Ryan/Invision/AP)

Rihanna followed Brazilian-born Daniela Issa Helayel (better known as Issa), John Rocha, Julien Macdonald and others to center stage on the second day of fashion week.

Much of the buzz Saturday was about Rihanna's first-even fashion collection. Many of her outfits had a simple, monochrome look — in off-reds, yellow, navy, black and other colors —

and they were cut to look good on those blessed with a fit physique.

Some were satin, some jersey, and some of the short skirts were made with denim and matched with crop tops or T-shirts.

Rihanna also tried her hand at a few elegant, semi-sheer dresses that were predominantly black with white floral patterns.

The singer appeared unusually shy but happy in her brief appearance on the catwalk to take in the audience's applause. She wore a short black dress as she waved to her fans.

If Rihanna brought a touch of show biz royalty to the catwalk, Issa brought her gold-plated royal connections. She is one of the favorite designers of the Duchess of Cambridge, the former Kate Middleton, who helped bring Issa to the world's attention before her marriage to Prince William. Issa toned down her usual tropical exuberance to pay homage to the designs associated with Native Americans, particularly the Navajo, in a more muted but elegant presentation.

"It's quite different for us," Issa said. "I was very inspired by American Indians, the Navajos, the feathers. The woman goes to Morocco, she's nomadic, she's far cooler than before."

The shapes and cut were dramatic, and knitwear tops that turned into cowl necks and balaclava-style headgear brought warmth and wit to the show. So did the hats, some trailed by feathers that were three feet long.

Of course, she threw in a few sparkly evening dresses, with a plunging neckline or a backless look, to help make cocktail hour sizzle. Despite leaving behind the fine weather and natural allure of Brazil, Issa said she finds joy in London, even if the weather is often drab.

"Even when it's misty and fog, it's beautiful," she said. "The shades of gray are fantastic. And it's not misty and foggy all the time."

And she gets a kick out of being part of an A-list fashion crowd, enjoying a reception Friday night at 10 Downing Street with designer Victoria Beckham, American Vogue editor Anna Wintour and other top figures.

Issa denies designing any maternity clothes for the Duchess of Cambridge, who is expecting a baby in July. But she said many of her stretchy dresses are popular with mothers-to-be.

The five-day spectacle continues Sunday with shows by Vivienne Westwood, Temperley London, L'Wren Scott and others. □

Overseas slice of 'Pi' flips Hollywood formula

DAVID GERMAIN
AP Movie Writer

LOS ANGELES (AP) — In mathematical terms, divide the circumference of the world by its diameter, and you have pi. In Hollywood terms, add a United Nations mix of ingredients and you have the blockbuster "Life of Pi."

With 11 Academy Awards nominations — second only to "Lincoln" with 12 — and the sort of global box-office receipts normally reserved for superheroes, "Life of Pi" is one of the most unusual megahits ever to hit the big-screen. Approaching \$600 million at the box office worldwide, the film is by

far the top-grosser among the nine best-picture nominees — with \$200 million more than "Les Miserables" and "Django Unchained," its closest rivals.

"Life of Pi" has action, suspense and spectacle, but it's a thoughtful, contemplative, internalized film, a philosophical and even cryptic story that touched something in the worldwide psyche resulting in business in the realm of more traditional Hollywood hits such as "The Hunger Games," "Men in Black 3" and "Brave."

Though backed by 20th Century Fox, the film has an international sensibil-

ity that "Life of Pi" director Ang Lee hopes will gradually become part of everyday business in Hollywood, which has a long history of telling tales — even overseas ones — with an American perspective.

"It's a global movie culture. The mainstream cinematic language was largely set up by Hollywood, Americans, therefore it's American. Some European directors, but it was an American spirit," Lee said. "I think the film language that's established here, that's the biggest obstacle when you try to do something different. You know, the world views things differently. □



Suraj Sharma as Pi Patel in a scene from "Life of Pi." With 11 Academy Awards nominations, second only to "Lincoln" with 12, and the sort of global box-office receipts normally reserved for superheroes, "Life of Pi" is one of the most unusual megahits ever to hit the big-screen. (AP Photo/20th Century Fox)

The Rap On Rubio



MAUREEN DOWD
© 2013 New York Times

WASHINGTON — Not long ago, scrolling for a movie, I saw that “Notorious” was on.

How can you resist Cary Grant as an American spy in Rio recruiting Ingrid Bergman to seduce and betray a Nazi played by Claude Rains?

But it turned out to be a very different “Notorious,” one about the rise of gangsta rapper Biggie Smalls, aka The Notorious B.I.G., his artistic relationship with Sean “Puffy” Combs at Bad Boy Records in New York and the bloody East vs. West feud between Biggie and Tupac Shakur, a star in L.A. who spent his final year at Death Row records.

Like the 1946 “Notorious,” the 2009 gangsta rap saga offered sex, strife, danger, gats, Champagne, a strong immigrant mother and trust issues. Crack replaced uranium as the perilous substance. The movie climaxed with Tupac getting shot in a car on the Las Vegas Strip in 1996 and then, in retaliation six months later, Biggie getting shot in a car in L.A. Little did I know, as I brushed up on gangsta rap history, that the topic would soon spice up the overture to the 2016 presidential race. Gangsta rap used to be a reliable issue for politicians, but they were denouncing it. Now Sen. Marco Rubio of Florida is praising it — and right at the moment when Republicans are pushing the argument that guns don’t kill people; it’s a culture glorifying guns and violence that kills people.

The ubiquitous 41-year-old — who’s on the cover of Time as “The Republican Savior” — looked as if he needed some saving himself as he delivered the party’s response to the State of the Union address in English (and Spanish). He seemed parched, shaky and sweaty, rubbing his face and at one point lunging off-camera to grab a bottle of water. He needed some of the swagger reflected on the Spotify playlist he recently released featuring Tupac’s “Changes,” as well as Flo Rida, Pitbull, The Sugar Hill Gang, Kanye, Big Sean, devoted Obama supporters Jay-Z and Will.I.Am, and a Foster the People song about “a cowboy kid” who finds a gun in his dad’s closet and goes after “all the other kids with the pumped up kicks.”

Rubio told GQ that he loved the documentary on Tupac, “Resurrection,” and his song, “Killing Me Softly,” and that 30-year-old hip-hop is now “indistinguishable” from pop. (Sorry, Tipper.)

He said that Tupac, who loved Shakespeare and called “Romeo and Juliet” “serious ghetto,” wrote poetry. Tupac’s “Changes” lyric — “You see the old way wasn’t working so it’s on us to do what we gotta do to survive” — could be an anthem for the busted Republican Party.

Maybe Rubio is siding with West Coast rap in an early bid to nail down California’s 55 electoral votes. But in The Atlantic Wire, Elspeth Reeve argues that, message-wise, it would make more sense for the ambitious GOP senator to go with B.I.G., who had “up-from-his-bootstraps small-business acumen” and a mom who immigrated from Jamaica and ended up, as Biggie rapped, pimping an Acura with “minks on her back.” Tupac’s mother and stepfather were Black Panthers. Asked by BuzzFeed’s Ben Smith about this recently, Rubio said that he was in school at the peak of Death Row music and preferred it.

He demurred when asked if he had learned any life lessons from Tupac — “I don’t listen to music for the politics of it” — and noted that mostly, rappers were not “condoning a certain lifestyle” as much as reporting on “what life was like in South Central.”

One-upping Paul Ryan and his heavy metal playlist, Rubio noted that the real name of Pitbull — also born in Miami to Cuban parents — is Armando and that Tupac has a lyric citing Bill Clinton and “Mr. Bob Dole.”

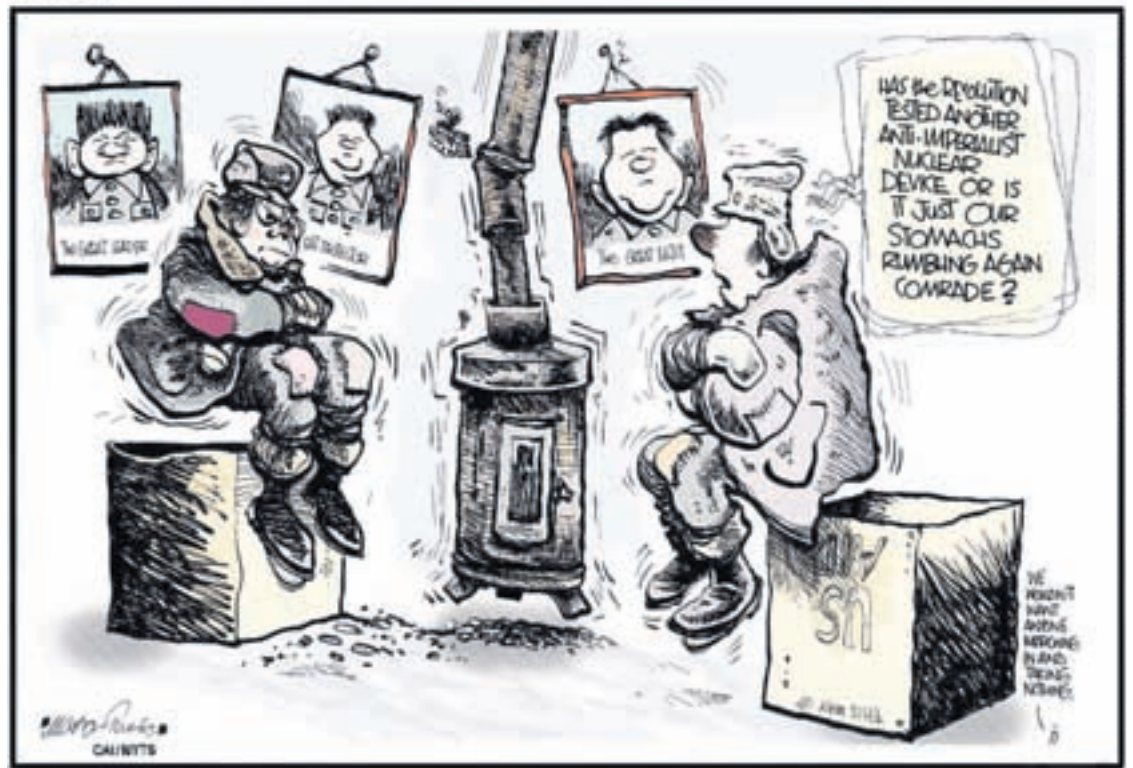
In 1995, Dole railed that human dignity is demeaned when “sexual violence is given a catchy tune.” And, in 1992, Dan Quayle met with the daughter of a Texas state trooper who was fatally shot by a man who said he’d been listening to Tupac’s “2pacalypse Now,” with lyrics about “droppin’ the cop;” Quayle said such songs should not be published.

Rush Limbaugh mocked Tupac when he was shot in 1994 outside a New York studio where Biggie was recording; and he recently re-broadcast his 20-year-old rant about America losing its soul: “Look at 2 Live Crew’s ‘Me So Horny.’ You know what that’s about? It’s about the destruction of the female vagina by a bunch of men having a good time.” (Sounds like a description of retrogressive Republicans in 2012; when the Violence Against Women Act passed the Senate on Tuesday, Rubio voted against it.)

But other Republicans are so frantic to make their party less white and more hip that Rubio’s exegeses on gangsta rap are music to their ears.

Right now, Marco is like a paper doll, trying on different outfits of style and substance as the party oohs and aahs. As Nicolle Wallace, the former adviser to Sarah Palin, gushed to George Stephanopoulos: “He’s modern. He knows who Tupac is. He is on social media.” And “he’s close to the younger Bushes.”

Who could ask for anything more? □



The State Of Preschool



GAIL COLLINS
© 2013 New York Times

One of the big moments of the State of the Union address was President Barack Obama’s call for “high-quality preschool” for 4-year-olds.

Nobody was happier at the idea than Walter Mondale, the former vice president.

“This is going to be wonderful,” he said in a phone conversation. His delight was sort of inspiring. If I had been down the road Mondale has traveled, my mood would have been a little darker. In 1971, when he was a senator, Mondale led the congressional drive to make quality preschool education available to every family in the United States that wanted it. Everybody. The federal government would set standards and provide backup services like meals and medical and dental checkups. Tuition would depend on the family’s ability to pay.

And it passed! Then Richard Nixon vetoed it, claiming Congress was proposing “communal approaches to child rearing.” Now, 42 years later, working parents of every economic level scramble madly to find quality programs for their preschoolers, while the waiting lines for poor families looking for subsidized programs stretch on into infinity.

And Obama is trying, against great odds, to do something for

4-year-olds.

People, think about this for a minute. We have no bigger crisis as a nation than the class barrier. We’re near the bottom of the industrialized world when it comes to upward mobility. A child born to poor parents has a pathetic chance of growing up to be anything but poor. This isn’t the way things were supposed to be in the United States. But here we are.

Would it be different if all the children born over the past 40 years had been given access to top-quality early education — programs that not only kept them safe while their parents worked but gave them the language and reasoning skills that wealthy families pass on as a matter of course?

We’ll never know.

Mondale’s Comprehensive Child Development Act was a bipartisan bill, which passed 63-17 in the Senate. It was an entitlement, and, if it had become law, it would have been one entitlement for little children in a world where most of the money goes to the elderly.

“We came up with a lot of proposals, but the one we were most excited about was early childhood education. Everything we learned firmed up the view this really works,” Mondale said.

The destruction of his bill was one of the earliest victories of the new right. “The federal government should not be in the business of raising America’s children. It was a political and ideological ideal of great importance,” Pat Buchanan once told me.

He was working at the White House when the bill reached Nixon’s desk, and he helped write the veto message. He spoke about this achievement with great pride.

The saga of the demise of the Comprehensive Child Development Act is an excellent explanation of why Obama was prepared to go through so much political trauma to pass health care reform, even when many of his own party members were

begging him to drop back, do something less earth-shaking and wait for a better moment.

The better moment might never come.

After Gerald Ford became president, the early childhood education bill’s supporters tried to resurrect the plan. They had hardly done anything besides agree that they probably ought to wait until after the 1976 election, when they were hit with a political tsunami. Members of Congress started getting hundreds and hundreds — sometimes thousands and thousands — of hysterical letters accusing them of plotting to destroy the American family.

This was before constituent email, when that kind of outpouring was shocking, particularly since a number of the writers seemed to believe that Congress was plotting to allow children to organize labor unions and sue their parents for making them do chores. “That was really the beginning of the Tea Party. The right wing started to turn on this thing viciously,” Mondale said. “They said it was a socialist scheme. They were really pounding the members of Congress, and a lot of people got cold feet.”

Nobody really knew where it was all coming from. A reporter for The Houston Chronicle traced the hysteria back to a man in Kansas who had written the leaflet, based on information he’d received from a revival in Missouri, which he told the reporter he had since learned was almost all completely wrong.

But that was it. Later, people would begin proposing modest preschool programs, particularly for the offspring of poor women who were required to work after the repeal of welfare entitlements in the Clinton years. But there would never again be a serious attempt to guarantee all American families access to quality early education and after-school programs.

The president proposes doing something for 4-year-olds. This is a great idea. Mondale is certainly enthusiastic. But still.

As fisheries struggle, debate heats up over solutions

JESS BIDGOOD

© 2013 New York Times

GLOUCESTER, Mass. — B.G. Brown, a second-generation fisherman who chases cod and haddock from this port city, spent a recent morning rigging up his 31-foot commercial vessel to be manned alone. He had just lost his only crew member to the more lucrative lobster fishery, days after fishery regulators last month approved a 77 percent cut in the amount of cod that can be harvested from the Gulf of Maine waters here. "It's kind of tricky setting hooks by yourself," said Brown. At 41, he is one of the younger members of the aging cadre that still

fishing and imperfect fishery management could all be to blame for the crisis, depending on whom you ask.

The situation looked so dire that the Commerce Department declared the Northeastern commercial groundfish fishery a disaster last fall, along with three salmon fisheries in Alaska and Mississippi's blue crab and oyster fisheries.

That declaration paved the way for Congress to appropriate financial relief to those areas — a stop-and-start process that saw \$150 million attached to, then stripped from, the Hurricane Sandy relief bill. Recently, Rep. John Tierney,

fallow stretch of the inner harbor where a white sign read "Under Idea Development." This, she says, could be a research center or the home of an ocean technology company. She hopes businesses like that could help Gloucester maintain its economic identity as a port city, even as the fishing fleet shrinks.

"T-shirts, taffy, not interested," said Kirk, alluding to coastal communities like Hampton, N.H., that have built boardwalk economies. "How do we take the working port and put it back to work in a different kind of way?"

To Kirk, a former management consultant who is run-

port, we will lose the infrastructure, we will lose our heritage and authenticity," Kirk said.

If Congress appropriates the full \$150 million, Kirk thinks some of it should be used for direct aid to the fishing industry, "but then let's also do some other things," she said.

"Programs that might attract those other uses that allow you to maintain a smaller fleet, and maintain an infrastructure for that fleet, and sit side by side," she explained. "My vision is, it's more comprehensive than just taking care of one fisherman."

Kirk is the first to admit that suggesting using any of the

and the industry readjusts, and is intended to preserve this storied industry and individual livelihoods. A rebuilt infrastructure won't help, some say, if there is no fleet to use it.

Russell Sherman stood at the wheel of his boat, the Lady Jane, as light faded and his crew prepared to dock for the night. He made \$19,800 fishing last year, he said, and at 64 is afraid he will go into foreclosure. "People are on the hook for money and they're not going to be able to pay it off," said Sherman, a founding member of the Northeast Seafood Coalition, an industry group that supports fishermen and has



A fishing boat attracts seagulls as it travels across the harbor in Gloucester, Massachusetts. The prospect of millions of dollars in aid, aimed at reviving the fishery industry, has divided fishermen and officials in Gloucester over the future of the area's shoreline economy.

(Gretchen Ertl/The New York Times)

plumbs these waters for groundfish, but he has reluctantly listed his boat for sale. "I don't want to give up, and I really want to find a way to try and stay on the water, but I really just don't see a way at the moment," he said.

Brown is one of hundreds of fishermen caught in the net that has tightened around this industry and its seaside communities as the numbers of both fish and boats appear to be at historically low levels. Changes in the ecosystem, lingering effects of decades of over-

D-Mass., proposed legislation that would draw aid money from a tax on imported fish.

But the prospect of significant money coming into the community has ignited a debate here over who gets it, dividing the fishermen on the piers, who see it as a lifeline in a time of deep struggle, from city officials who agree, but would also like to spend some of it to boost a new shoreline economy.

On a cold winter day, Carolyn Kirk, the mayor of Gloucester, looked over a

ning for a fourth two-year term, the disaster money is an opportunity to help the fishermen — but also to diversify the economy, which she thinks could position itself at the center of the marine science and technology sector. That, she hopes, could help the city rebuild its economy as have some Massachusetts mill cities, such as Lowell and Worcester, that now host biotech companies and warehouse apartments.

"If we rely on the romance associated with the fishing industry, we will lose the

money for anything other than direct aid is controversial. "I made my vision and perspective known, and I had a line out the door of fishermen banging on my door, wanting to see me right away," she said.

One of those fishermen was Paul Vitale. "She's trying to get money to fix the city — that shouldn't come out of my pocket," said Vitale. "It shouldn't go to anyone but the fishermen."

Vitale and many other fishermen here say the aid offers them a way to hold on until the stocks rebound

pushed against deep cuts to the industry. "Desperate situation."

"This is a harbor, it has a lot of potential, a lot of research potential and stuff, but that shouldn't come out of our back. We're going to try the best we can to get as many guys through this. I won't get through it, but there will be younger fishermen who will," Sherman said.

Brown hopes that aid might allow him to hold on. "I have huge bills on my permits that I had to buy just to stay in it. □